

This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from the King's Research Portal at <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/>



Wellington's Logistical Arrangements in the Peninsular War 1809-14.

Redgrave, T. M. D

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author and no quotation from it or information derived from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

END USER LICENCE AGREEMENT



Unless another licence is stated on the immediately following page this work is licensed

under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International

licence. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You are free to copy, distribute and transmit the work

Under the following conditions:

- Attribution: You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).
- Non Commercial: You may not use this work for commercial purposes.
- No Derivative Works - You may not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any of these conditions can be waived if you receive permission from the author. Your fair dealings and other rights are in no way affected by the above.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact librarypure@kcl.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

WELLINGTON'S LOGISTICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN THE PENINSULAR WAR 1809-14

Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD

by

Toby Michael Ormsby Redgrave

of King's College, University of London



Wellington's Logistical Arrangements in the Peninsular War 1809-14

Toby Michael Ormsby Redgrave

After observing the paucity of published information regarding the organisation and duties of the Peninsular commissariat and the inaccuracy of some of those statements that are to be found in this thesis, explaining first the impediments arising out of the internal organisation of the department itself, examines in turn the provenance of the army's food and forage supplies, the means adopted to pay for expenses incurred in the Peninsula, the limitations of the transport system and the functioning of all aspects of the service in support of offensive operations. In these studies it is argued that local resources played a large part in the provisioning of the army, and were particularly important during offensive operations: that the commissariat employed credit to raise money and obtain goods and services: that transport was also mostly locally recruited and that shortage of money was one of the main hindrances to the efficiency of the transport system. In conclusion, besides a demonstration of how the British and French systems of commissariat differed and how their differences affected the grand strategy of the war, it is shown that the British mode of supply was too expensive to sustain large scale operations for long, with the result that the campaign of 1812 could barely be supported and the campaigns of 1813/14 had to be conducted with an eye towards economy and under severe logistical restrictions.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I:	Introduction. Logistics and the Demands of Strategy in the Peninsula	4
CHAPTER II:	The Internal Organisation of the Peninsular Commissariat Department	16
CHAPTER III:	The Provenance of Food and Forage Supplies to the Army 1809-14	51
	A. Bread	52
	B. Meat	71
	C. Alcohol	85
	D. Forage and Forage Corn	91
CHAPTER IV:	Money and Credit in Spain and Portugal 1809-14	107
CHAPTER V:	The Organisation of Transport 1809-14	133
CHAPTER VI:	The Logistical Basis of Wellington's Offensive Operations 1812-14	157
CHAPTER VII:	The Limitations of Wellington's System of Commissariat and its Influence upon Strategy	184
BIBLIOGRAPHY		201

LIST OF FIGURES

Table of Returns and Accounts to be Submitted by Commissariat Accountants	23
Annual Disbursements in the Peninsula 1809-14	108
The Supply to the 6th Division, Summer 1812	169
Map of the Area of Operations Showing the Principal Towns and Other Places Mentioned in the Text	200

CHAPTER I : Introduction. Logistics and the Demands of Strategy
in the Peninsula.

If any justification be needed for presenting a thesis about the provisioning of Wellington's army in the Peninsula, it is surely criticism on the grounds of the subject's familiarity rather than its unimportance that may be expected. "The whole future of the army in 1809", Oman wrote, "depended on whether the Commissariat Department would be able to rise to the height of its duties"¹, and he later felt entitled to conclude that the successful maintenance of the Peninsular War "in 1810-11-12 was surely, at bottom, the work of the much maligned commissaries"². This statement of the vital nature of the commissaries' duties has passed unchallenged to the present day³. It may however be felt that a topic so important must be equally well-known and either comprehended in one of the three major English histories of the war or already the subject of a specialised study. Surprisingly the histories are all reticent about commissariat affairs, none more so than Oman's own⁴, where the volumes concerning the events of 1809-14 contain no index entries whatever under the heads of Commissariat, Commissary-General, Kennedy or Bisset. Fortescue's four volumes on the same period⁵ have five references to Commissariat but only one of these conveys information about the Peninsular system and some of its statements are misleading. Thus the Commissariat Car Train is said to have "put the finishing touch to the organisation of the transport"⁶, while 1812 is "the year which may be taken as that in which ... (the transport and supply system) was finally perfected"⁷. Napier devotes little more space to commissariat matters than Fortescue, although making the important point that Spain was far from destitute of food, its transport from one place to another being the main problem for

1. C. Oman, Wellington's Army, 1913, p 161.

2. Ibid, p 319.

3. Indeed a modern writer has gone further and asserted that "it is essential to grasp the elements of this system (of commissariat) before considering Wellington's tactical system". F. Myatt, The Soldier's Trade, 1974, p 180.

4. C. Oman, A History of the Peninsular War, 7 vols, Oxford, 1903-30.

5. J. W. Fortescue, History of the British Army, 1899-1930, vols VII-X.

6. Ibid, vol VIII, p 344.

7. Ibid.

an army⁸. Questions of finance receive more detailed attention than matters of commissariat system or the procuring and transporting of supplies in all three works but they are always treated out of their economic context and the problems associated with them are only partly explained. Altogether little will be found in these great histories about what the commissaries' duties were, in what way and how successfully they accomplished them and what effect their activities had upon the nature of the war. Subsequent general histories have been hardly more revealing.

Turning to specialised studies of commissariat matters in the Peninsula the student will be confronted with five, one of which is a short article and none of which forms the major part of the work in which it is found. Two of these five essays are older than the rest. The chapters on the Peninsula in Fortescue's history of the R.A.S.C. are skimpy⁹, containing little more information than the 'History of the British Army' and strung together with a short synopsis of the military operations. Much superior is the chapter on the commissariat in Oman's 'Wellington's Army'¹⁰. Here, although the reader will discover that a part of the supplies consumed by the British army was requisitioned or otherwise obtained locally, the role of convoys bringing provisions from the coast to the troops is emphasised and British naval supremacy cited as the vital factor that enabled the Peninsular army to be supported. Consequent upon this view, Oman suggests that the American war of 1812-14 endangered the army to the extent that grave consequences would have followed its outbreak earlier than in 1812. This theory overestimates the military danger posed by the American privateers by ignoring the fact that few of the food imports for army use into Spain and Portugal were carried in British shipping¹¹. A similar theme has however been approached again in more recent times by G E Watson, who suggests that the United States had it in their power to cripple the British war effort in the Peninsula, either by cutting off all supplies of

8. W Napier, History of the War in the Peninsula and in the South of France from the Year 1807 to the Year 1814, 6 vols, 1832-40.

9. J W Fortescue, R.A.S.C. A History of Transport and Supply in the British Army, 2 vols, 1930.

10. See also the references to commissariat duties on pp 161/2 and 261-7.

11. The military dangers of the American war were probably greater in 1813 than they would have been in 1810 since for part of the former year Wellington was depending so greatly upon the sea communication between Lisbon and Santander.

flour in late 1812 rather than mid-1813 or by continuing to sell flour and relying on the consequent specie drain to bankrupt the British commissariat¹². Considering the large purchases of wheat made by British agents in South America and the Middle East during 1813, to say nothing of the large stocks (over five months' consumption at the end of 1812) of flour held at Lisbon in the first place, it seems unlikely that the British army could have been starved out of the Peninsula by the withdrawal of the American flour supply from the outbreak of the 1812-14 war, although privations might have been inflicted upon the civilian population of Portugal by this measure. The specie drain, although causing worry to the British even in 1811, the year of the Non-Importation Act and of a huge increase in American flour exports to Portugal, patently had not brought about the bankruptcy of the commissariat before mid 1813, the time when these exports began sharply to decline, and the general amelioration of the British financial position in the early part of 1813 tends to counteract the suggestion that bankruptcy might have been the result of the exports being further encouraged. In any case, by the summer of 1813 the American flour supply was no longer of great importance to the British peninsular army¹³.

The attention of more recent writers on commissariat affairs has been more comparative, more concentrated upon modifying the old simplification that the British, relying on depots, fought the French who relied on eating what they found along the way. Richard Glover, in a general essay on commissariat affairs¹⁴, observes that to some extent 18th century armies had 'lived off the country', particularly in the matter of forage, and that the contribution of the French revolutionary armies to the commissary's art was not the invention of the requisition but a new ruthlessness in its application. His statement that "in general all armies had to live on the produce of the land where they were campaigning in the days before railways or modern methods of food preservation enabled them to live on supplies from afar¹⁵", applies in part to the Peninsula if "the land where they

12. G E Watson, 'The United States and the Peninsular War', Historical Journal, December 1976. The two arguments, clearly incompatible, that are set out above are wielded rather like Dr Johnson's pistol.

13. See chapter III for details and references regarding the supply of flour and wheat.

14. Richard Glover, Peninsular Preparation, C U P, 1963, Appendix A, p 255-66.

15. Ibid, p 258. Glover excepts the supply through the North Spanish ports in 1813 from this generalisation.

were campaigning" is interpreted more widely than simply as the land which the troops occupied, but ignores the not inconsiderable imports which helped supply the British army in all the war years. These imports should not surprise, nor on account of them should credit be allowed to commissariat enterprise, since Portugal and Spain were ~~not~~ importers of wheat on a large scale even in peacetime. Although Glover mentions the importance of transport in utilising the resources of the general locality and prompt payment for supplies obtained locally, these subjects are treated in greater detail and with direct reference to the peninsular situation by S. G. P. Ward in the most informative and accurate of these specialised studies as far as the Peninsula is concerned.¹⁶ Ward, pointing out that the British requisitioned some and purchased in the Peninsula many of the supplies consumed by their army, cites the factors of money and transport, along with staff shortage, as the most important constraints upon the commissariat system. Transport enabled supplies to be drawn from a wider area than that which the army physically occupied, and money was necessary to pay both for the transport and for the supplies it was to carry. This basic analysis is itself only a reiteration of what was observed over a century ago by a commissary who had served in a senior capacity in Spain and Portugal. "Money and Transport," he wrote, "may be called the Field Commissary's right and left arm; but though credit or even force may imperfectly remedy the want of the one, nothing can replace the other".¹⁷

It is not intended to quarrel with this proposition, urged by the old authority and the new. More remains to be said however about how it worked in practice. To what extent did the British make credit or force do the work of money, and how were their operations limited by financial stringencies? How far could the transport system cope with the demands made upon it? What alterations in the mode of supply were necessary to support active operations? Misleading or inaccurate answers to questions like these are to be found in modern works. Thus in an article by Weller¹⁸

16. S G P Ward, Wellington's Headquarters, O U P, 1957. Chapter entitled 'The Maintenance of the Army in the Peninsula', pp 66-101.

17. R I Routh, Observations on Commissariat Field Service and Home Defences, London, 1852, p 21.

18. J Weller 'Wellington's Peninsular War Logistics', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, XLII, P 197.

it is stated that local purchases were fair, honest and proper but not how soon and in what medium they were paid. In any case it is presumed, as it is by Oman, that most of the provisions used were brought from overseas. Weller also vaguely asserts that a transport breakthrough was brought about in 1812 by the opening of the Tagus and Douro rivers as far as Spain, making "transportation. . . easy in the central area." Ward too, although accurate regarding the system by which the transport was conducted between 1810-12 is evidently not familiar with its approximate capacity, for he, like Weller, makes it perform the feat of drawing supply depots forward into Spain to support the campaign of 1812.¹⁹ Thus one aim of this thesis will be to correct such misconceptions of detail. It is also intended to resolve the contradiction between the Oman and Weller opinion, that most supplies came from the coast, and the Ward and Glover opinion, that purchases in the general locality were predominant. The point is not merely academic since the ways in which the supply of money and the efficiency of the transport could affect the strategical possibilities depend upon the answer. If Wellington's army relied mainly on supplies brought by sea then the capacity of the transport service dictated the distance from the coast at which it could operate and the speed at which supplies could be moved controlled the rate at which the troops could be marched away from their coastal depots. Alternatively if the army relied mainly on drawing provisions from the general area of operations it could manoeuvre with less transport but would need more money, and its operations would be limited by different considerations, the season for example, or the need to protect its supply areas.

Accordingly chapter III (and in part chapter VI) is devoted to examining the provenance of the British army's supplies, each major ration commodity receiving separate treatment in the attempt to show that local resources played a large, though by no means exclusive, part in the provisioning of the army, and were especially important during offensive operations. Chapter IV will demonstrate that the Peninsular commissariat lived on credit, by means of which they both raised money and bought goods and services, and, aided by chapters VI and VII, that the increasing expense

19. "When at Burgos in 1812 the Army had scarcely been able to be supported by the tenuous line from Portugal." Ward, op.cit, p 97. See also his extensibility of depots theory on p 83.

of the war grew nearly too great for that credit in 1812 and called thereafter for retrenchment which affected operations. Chapter V will explain the transport system and the changes that took place in it and will show how shortage of money was one of the main factors limiting its efficiency. Chapter VI will relate all these aspects of the service to the conduct of Wellington's offensive operations, concentrating on those of 1812-14. The whole argument is prefaced by chapter II which deals with the internal organisation of the Peninsular commissariat department, partly as a help in understanding the references to ranks and duties which will be made in succeeding chapters and partly to illustrate the basic difficulties, like shortage of officers, their lack of training and the cumbersome accounting system, which hampered commissariat business and which should be seen as the continuing background to the picture presented in the chapters that follow. In these chapters an attempt has been made not to depend simply on qualitative evidence. Rather than say, for example, that Wellington's army at a certain period was supplied partly by requisition, with instances, partly by contract, with instances, partly by imports, with more instances, it has been attempted to enliven the use of instances with rough calculations of the relative importance of the various categories distinguished. Thus if supply by requisition were proffered as a revolutionary new aspect of Wellington's affairs, it would be a more important novelty if such supply could be shown to account for, say, 25% of the army's provisions than if it only occurred 1% of the time. An effort will be made to provide such percentages where at all possible, not in any meticulous interest - for the best of the results will only be approximations embodying several assumptions into data initially less complete than might be wished - but for the purpose of enabling the reader to assess the importance of the statement made or qualification offered.

Though this is not intended to be a comparative study a certain measure of comparison with the French methods of supply is inevitable and it may be helpful here to indicate the way the French administered the gathering of provisions. General Clausel's orders regarding the support of the Army of the North in the year 1813/14 may be seen in the British Museum²⁰.

20. B.M. Eg Mss 388. This order of course never took effect, being overtaken by events.

They took the form of a contribution of ten million dollars paid in monthly instalments and divided among the provinces in the army's charge according to an estimate of their relative wealth. It was preferred that the contribution be paid in cash but up to half could be offered in kind, a list of acceptable commodities and fixed prices being included in the order. A rough calculation suggests that this sum would be nearly enough to feed Clausel's force for a year but would not meet any transport costs nor provide anything towards the army's pay. The difference, if any, between supplies realised by contribution and supplies consumed would need to be met by unplanned requisitions but the gap was closed a little further by the existence of a dormant contribution requiring towns when called upon to give support to flying columns. The allocation of liability and the collection of the money was left to the native administration but enforcement of the order was in the army's hands and would take place in the event of the levy not being met within five days of the end of any month. If fairly administered and efficiently executed it cannot be supposed that this decree laid any excessive burden upon the locality, since it was in lieu of the royal taxes that would have been levied before the French arrived and since it only represented the bare subsistence of Clausel's troops, whose numbers only increased the population of the occupied provinces by about $2\frac{1}{2}\%$.

The burdensome side of the French occupation was the fact that not all their requisitions could be planned in advance and distributed fairly. Any region through which troops were marching or which would only be temporarily occupied, or any area in which a large field force had been concentrated, might be drained utterly of resources whose collection would probably not be systematised in the least. Thus when Masséna's army occupied the Rio Maior position the collection of provisions appears to have been entirely the units' duty, supervised in a general sense at army corps level, with the Intendant-General a mere spectator, lacking alike transport and military authority²¹. A great deal of the French military effort in the first three years of the war went into subduing new areas

21. J B Koch, Mémoires de Masséna . . Paris 1848-50, vol VII pp 239 and 276. J J Pelet, The French Campaign in Portugal 1810-11, ed. and transl. Horward, Minneapolis, 1973, p 255.

and campaigning against the allied field armies in territory which was not in a state of organisation to admit of requisitions in the orderly manner of the example cited, and so where the French (like their Spanish opponents) had no recourse but to more or less outright pillaging²².

While Napoleon's armies thus depended greatly upon the resources of the area they occupied, whether realised in an orderly or an irregular manner, it should not be forgotten that, imports of food being an inescapable economic necessity in Peninsula life at war or in peace, overseas resources went to feed the French armies as well as other occupants of Spain. "The connexion (sic) of the Jew Baccri with the French," wrote the British pro-consul at Algiers, "is publicly known at Alicant; and also that vessels under Moorish colours continually carry provisions to the enemy."²³ This passage was written respecting an incident where H.M. Brig 'Philomel' had captured an Algerine vessel upon suspicion, later confirmed, that she was carrying corn to Barcelona, but Baccri himself had been involved in a suspicious affair the previous spring when another of his cargoes, bound for Lisbon, had been captured by a French privateer and carried into Malaga. The British were convinced the capture had been arranged but were never able to prove the point; the historian is in a position to observe what seems to have escaped notice at the time, that shortly after the incident Baccri was in a position to offer a large lump sum to the British commissariat in Portugal, to be paid for in Bills on the Treasury. The French forces in Catalonia and Aragon at least must have benefited from such traffic in supplies.

The necessity for a comparison between the British and French commissariat methods arises when the influence of commissariat matters upon strategy and the course of events is considered. If the neat distinction between an army which lived off resources brought from afar and another which used those found locally, be rejected, is it still true to say that the British system conveyed more advantages than the French and if so, in what did the advantage consist? This question is considered in chapter VII. The more

22. "En Espagne... les habitants .. étaient .. tous en insurrection, fuyant à notre approche, il était bien difficile de vivre autrement que de maraude", "Aucune réquisition régulière n'eût été praticable". Jomini, Guerre d'Espagne, ed. F Lecomte, p 31.

23. B.M. Add Mss 41512 McDonnell to Athy 24th February 1813.

general question however of how far British operations were affected by the nature of the supply system receives consideration at various points in the course of the study. The influences will be found at the higher levels of strategy, since under immediate necessity Wellington invariably reacted first on military grounds and expected the commissariat to make do as best it could. Sometimes the required support could not be provided, as for example in the pursuit of Masséna from the Rio Maior when military considerations obviously counselled a prompt advance which ten days later was forced to halt for lack of supplies. On the other hand Beresford's attempt to relieve Badajoz, also undertaken on purely military logic, although thwarted by the early fall of the place, proved by dint of much exertion and improvisation on the commissariat side possible to support. Many smaller movements too were made during the war when it must have been obvious that their supply would be uncertain, simply on grounds of strategical desirability. The posting of Craufurd's brigade forward in spring 1810 and the movement of Le Marchant's cavalry to cover the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812 are clear examples. To a certain extent even premeditated operations were undertaken with an optimistic rather than precise calculation of commissariat factors, as will be seen in chapter VI²⁴. At the local strategical or grand tactical levels the major contribution of supply matters to events arose from the fact that French soldiers were encouraged to keep on their persons as much food as they could carry while Wellington would never permit more than three days' rations (not alcohol) to be issued at a time, since the men would eat or sell their surplus supplies²⁵. The fact that supplies at the front in excess of the three day limit had to be held on mules, or even in a store if the mules' services were needed elsewhere, detracted from the mobility of the British army. Manoeuvres like Masséna's outflanking of the Bussaco position, Marmont's marches near the Douro before Salamanca and Soult's turning of Wellington's troops at San Christobal were far less of a risk under the French system than they would have been if executed by the allied army.

24. The general proposition of M Van Creveld, Supplying War, C U P, 1977, that, in the days when food was the major constituent of the supply needed by an army, the gaps in planning could usually be filled somehow on the spot, operated to a far greater extent in the Peninsula than has sometimes been supposed.

25. This circumstance was a matter of army organisation and discipline rather than any commissariat dogma or principle.

When the operations of the enemy were not causing alarms or counter measures on the allied side and when no offensive attempt necessitated close attention to the positioning of the troops, circumstances which prevailed at least in parts of the army quite often between 1809 and spring 1813, the cantonments of the units were usually selected with a view to making their supply as easy and inexpensive as possible. Thus the cavalry and artillery not needed at the outposts habitually lived to the rear of the infantry, near Tomar in 1809 and down the Mondego valley when the army was in the north, for greater ease of foraging the horses. The divisions too generally found quarters offering good access to the river depots on the Mondego or the Douro, as can plainly be seen from the dispositions of the army in, say, May 1812 or the winter of 1812/13. Such dispositions however hardly come under the head of strategy, and in the consideration given later to the influences of supply in strategical outcomes and decisions most attention will be given to commissariat planning in relation to grand strategical issues. Even here it will be seen that the commissariat arrangements proved themselves partly flexible and were not absolute dictators of events.

Although this thesis is concerned exclusively with the role in the supply of provisions played by the Peninsular commissariat, inasmuch as the Peninsular Commissary-General was the direct subordinate of the Commissary in Chief in London the authority of this latter and his place in the home administrative machine must be demonstrated to explain some of the events to which reference will later be made. Whereas in the American war of thirty years previously the force in the colonies had been supplied for the greater part of the hostilities by contractors to the Treasury Board²⁶, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars saw the progress of the commissariat as a Treasury sub-department towards complete control over the supply of stores and items of forage or provisions to the army. The appointment of Commissary-General²⁷ in 1793 carried with it little authority and few duties. All contracts for provisions were still made by the Treasury and the mechanics of supply to the troops overseas were shared between the Commissioners of Victualling and the Commissioners of Transports. All

26. N Baker, Government and Contractors, 1971.

27. The head of the commissariat department was styled Commissary-General until autumn 1809, Commissary in Chief thereafter.

supplies to troops at home in barracks were the responsibility of the Barrackmaster-General. In 1797 the country was divided for defence purposes into forty three districts and the experiment was made of localising the supply of provisions in order to reduce the waste and expense of maintaining large stocks in magazines. Each district was given a 'Central Commissary' empowered to make local contracts for all supplies except bread and by the following year the authority of the Commissary-General was extended over all the districts. The head of the commissariat had no authority abroad until the appointment of Colonel Gordon as the first Commissary in Chief in 1809 when his responsibility was widened to include all overseas stations excepting Ireland and the East Indies, but a great many other extensions of his power had taken place in the interim. He now made all contracts for bread, oats and forage²⁸, straw, fuel and candles both on a regular basis to troops in barracks and casually to detachments on the march or in camp. He was also the supplier of barrack equipment, subject to its meeting the standards of the Inspector of Barrack Stores, while to the troops abroad he was the provider of all the various articles nowadays collectively referred to as Quartermaster General's stores, although these items were designed, inspected and housed by the activities of the Storekeeper-General. The only important area of army supply in which the Commissary in Chief had no part whatever was the production and provision of Ordnance stores, which came under the exclusive control of the Ordnance department whose Master General was responsible directly to Parliament²⁹.

The Commissary in Chief was the head of the commissariat at home and abroad with the qualifications already mentioned, but he was himself a Treasury subordinate and his activities were always kept under serious scrutiny. All correspondence from the heads of the department abroad went from the Commissariat office to the Treasury who generally passed back comments or instructions regarding the situation which the Commissary in Chief then used as the basis of his reply. All despatch of provisions or money, all administrative details, all disciplinary measures, promotions or increases in establishment required the Treasury's

28. Meat contracts remained generally on a local basis.

29. See the 18th Report of the Commissioners of Military Inquiry (1812) for the progress of the commissariat 1793-1809.

sanction. While J.C. Herries was Commissary in Chief³⁰ the close supervision over commissariat affairs exercised by the Treasury might be more reasonably termed co-operation, since Herries, himself a protegee of Spencer Perceval, had been a Treasury clerk earlier in his career and was on good terms with Vansittart and Charles Arbuthnot. Certainly his opinion was often consulted, both over financial questions like the certificates and 'half and half' schemes (see chapter IV) and over a matter like Maberly's proposal for water-proofing greatcoats where it might have been expected that the Storekeeper-General rather than the Commissary in Chief would have been involved.³¹ Nonetheless, at least as regards the service abroad, the Commissary in Chief was more an executive agent of the Treasury than an official who took major decisions on his own authority. His executive functions required that he act in close co-operation with other departments, notably that of the Storekeeper-General who laid down patterns, inspected and stored (in England) the stores that the commissariat bought, despatched and stored abroad³². This thesis is concerned however only with provisions which fell entirely outside the Storekeeper-General's responsibility, and regarding which the Commissary in Chief had to co-ordinate arrangements with two sub-departments of the Navy Board, the Commissioners of Victualling (chiefly for supplies of rum and salt meat) and the Transport Board who organised the shipping to carry the supplies overseas. Other provisions the Commissary in Chief normally obtained directly from private contractors. Thus while the Peninsular Commissary-General was responsible directly to the Commissary in Chief, reported to him and looked to him for orders, the real power of decision lay with the Lords of the Treasury, a fact it is easy to forget when looking from the Peninsula viewpoint, since the Commissary-General neither wrote to nor received letters from the Treasury directly. It is with the activities of the Peninsular commissariat that we shall henceforward be concerned.

30. Herries took over from Colonel Gordon on the 1st October 1811.

31. 'Waterproofing Soldiers' Great Coats', Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, XII, p 8, P.R.O. W.O. 57/4 Harrison to Herries, 13th December 1811 and 2nd January 1812.

32. In 1812 an office under the Storekeeper-General's control was set up at Cadiz and later another at Corunna. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132, Herries to O'Meara, 8th May 1812 and Herries to Bisset, 9th July 1812.

CHAPTER II : The Internal Organisation of the Peninsular Commissariat Department.

The four grades of commissariat officer serving in the Peninsula in 1809 were, in descending order of seniority, Commissary-General, Deputy Commissary-General, Assistant Commissary-General and Commissariat Clerk¹. In 1810 there was instituted the rank of Deputy Assistant Commissary-General (D.A.C.G.) senior to the clerks but below the Assistants, which addition to the hierarchy was necessitated largely by the increasing number of posts carrying individual responsibility that the enlarged size and greater dispersion of the army after 1809 created. Subordinate to these officers were various non-commissioned employees endowed with more or less responsibility according to the nature of their duties but with no single chain of command linking them all together. Thus a conductor of stores was superior to his bullock drivers, muleteers or herdsmen and a storekeeper was in command of the issuers and labourers who worked in his store but neither derived from his station any authority over the other. Further, since the size of convoys and depots alike varied widely, the mere grade of conductor or storekeeper is an inaccurate indicator of a man's importance. Any attempt to produce a correspondence between military and commissariat ranks breaks down below the commissioned level² where the categories into which the commissariat divided its employees were principally descriptive of the duty they performed rather than tokens of the authority they wielded. Perhaps the most sensible order in which to present these subordinate categories is in groups by diminishing rate of pay³. The best paid, earning between four and five shillings a day (650 to 800 reis Portuguese) were the conductors, storekeepers, interpreters and the holders of certain semi-clerical jobs. In the middle pay bracket (about 400 reis per day) were the coopers, receivers and issuers, master bakers and other skilled artisans together with the 'capatazes' or headmen

1. These styles were frequently abbreviated to C.G. D.C.G. A.C.G. and C.C. respectively. A clerk might also be rendered as C.D. (Commissariat Department).

2. As we shall see, there is hardly a practical correspondence of commissioned ranks either.

3. A variety of paylists can be found in P.R.O. W.O. 61/108.

of the various categories found in the lowest pay group (about 150 to 250 reis per day) which comprised the muleteers, bullock drivers, carmen, herdsmen, unskilled labourers and assistants to the bakers, carpenters and so on in the middle group.

While the duties executed by these junior categories of employee are mostly self explanatory this is not true in the case of the officers who between them carried out a great variety of tasks, which can be reduced to five main types, field posts, depot posts, administrative or coordinating posts, special temporary assignments and supervision of accounts. Field commissaries were attached directly to military formations. Each brigade of infantry and each regiment of cavalry had its own commissariat officer (known generally as a brigade commissary) and as the infantry divisions and cavalry brigades became regular formations during 1809/10 a senior officer was appointed to supervise the supply of the larger unit. The case of the artillery was more complicated as the Ordnance had its own supply organisation, the Field Train, but seemingly not enough officers to go round, as commissaries are frequently found attached to artillery brigades⁴ and sometimes too the artillery units were supplied by the commissaries of the nearest division. The brigade commissaries' duties were preparing and issuing the rations for the men and horses of their unit⁵, maintaining in a local depot whatever reserve stocks they were ordered to hold, organising the journeys of the unit's transport to collect provisions from whichever depot was allotted to them and ensuring by local purchase, contract or requisition that the supply did not fall short. When in addition to these duties it is considered that they were also required to keep meticulous accounts in duplicate or triplicate, it may be seen that a great deal of work was involved even when the unit was stationary. When it began to move, especially if the march took it further from its depots, the task became nightmarish. D.A.C.G. Head, commissary to the 3rd division during the advance to the Pyrenees in 1813, recalled his day commencing at three o'clock in the morning when he called on General Picton to learn the march

4. For example, Mr Head to Robe's brigade in spring 1810, or Mr Allsup to the Horse Artillery from 1811 to the end of the war.

5. This seemingly simple, if time consuming, task frequently included making arrangements for the grinding of flour, the baking of bread and the butchering of cattle.

orders, the morning being devoted to paying or registering claims by local inhabitants and scouring the countryside on either side of the line of march for provisions, the afternoon to milling and baking bread and the evening to issues to the division, sometimes extended over as much as five miles. He claimed often not to have retired before midnight! Originally, by the General Order of the 4th May 1809, it had been intended to use Assistants as brigade commissaries but shortage of officers of that rank soon made this practice impossible to maintain⁶ and for most of the war the field commissaries were officers from any of the three lowest commissioned grades, with Deputy Assistants predominant. Only the 2nd division, unusually large and frequently operating independently of the main army, was considered a Deputy's appointment as appears by the fact that three successive Assistants holding the post between 1810 and 1812 were styled Acting Deputy and were promoted during or soon after doing the duty⁷. Before the institution of the rank of Deputy Assistant the senior commissariat officer attached to a division had been styled Acting Assistant but this practice lapsed thereafter and it became commonplace to find Deputy Assistants in charge of divisions⁸, while clerks frequently did the duty of the cavalry and the infantry brigades.

By contrast depot commissaries held static posts. They were responsible not only for storing the provisions (and sometimes the field equipment and other stores) entrusted to them and for keeping accounts of all issues and receipts but also for levying, administering and paying the transport needed to fetch the provisions and to pass them from depot to depot when required. Besides these duties they had to supply detachments passing through and also any garrison or hospital in the town. It was also not uncommon for depot officers to enter into contracts at least sufficiently to meet the normal daily consumption. Head describes his duties as a subordinate clerk at Coimbra towards the end of 1809 as "drawing checks for returns of provisions and forage on the storekeeper in charge of the stores,

6. Even in the Oporto campaign not all units were served by Assistants.

7. The three Acting Deputies were Aylmer, Ogilvie and Routh. Ogilvie when a Deputy was senior commissariat officer to the 6th division for a short time in 1812 but this was only an interim appointment until he could be found a task more appropriate to his rank. All the information respecting promotions in this chapter is taken from the relevant Army List 1812-15.

8. For example, of Ogilvie's four divisional heads in 1814 three, Cuming, Dobree and Head, were Deputy Assistants and only one, Tupper Carey, was an Assistant.

upon documents, whereon it was my duty to see that the specified number of officers, rank and file, were correctly vouched by the commanding officer of the regiment or detachment; that the quantities of provisions drawn were correctly estimated and that the receipt was signed by the person duly authorised. These vouchers, in those days furnished in triplicate, were then entered in an abstract..."⁹ Keeping accounts evidently loomed large for the depot commissary, probably to an even greater extent than for his colleague in the field although his working conditions, being static, were more suitable for the paperwork involved. He was not entirely spared the pressure of active operations however, although he avoided the field commissary's greatest difficulty on campaign, buying or requisitioning food, since the movement of the army increased the demand for requisitioned transport. Despite the difference in the qualities required for field and depot work, the one demanding a man physically energetic and prompt in practical matters, the other best served by patience, tactful handling of the local authorities and administrative ability, there is no evidence that any specialisation among commissariat officers took place, their careers appearing to present a more or less haphazard sequence of field and depot postings¹⁰. Thus the same men and the same ranks found serving with the army are also found at the depots, with the slight difference that the largest depots were sometimes a Deputy's command¹¹. The assortment of junior ranks found among the depots is well illustrated by looking at the men commanding the important depots of north Portugal during the summer and autumn of 1812. Two were Assistants, Mackenzie at Oporto and St. Remy at Lamego, two, Head at Celorico and Kensington at Ciudad Rodrigo, were Deputy Assistants,

9. G Head, Memoirs of an Assistant Commissary-General, 1968, p 222.

10. Consider for example the careers of Messrs Carey and Head as typical of many who served from 1809 to 1814. Both served in the Coimbra depot in 1809. Thereafter Carey spent most of his time until July 1811 in various depots though attached for short periods to Erskine's brigade and Vaux's accounts office, and then served out the war in the field, first with Le Marchant's brigade and then the 4th division. Head spent 1810 attached to Robe's artillery brigade, moved in 1811 to the depot at Alter do Chao and then Celorico, where he remained until May 1813 when he received his final wartime posting, to the 3rd division. Ibid and N.I.S.Acc 4370 No 17916 f.57.

11. The important advanced depot at Salamanca in 1812 was commanded by D.C.G. Ogilvie and some more permanent depots were of equal status. For example Coimbra in the same period was run by D.C.G. Drake and Cadiz by D.C.G. O'Meara.

Lavers at Pesqueira was a temporary officer with the acting rank of Assistant¹², while Messrs Flanner and Buckham at Almeida were both clerks.

The overall co-ordination of measures as well as the administration of particular branches of the service was generally the province of the Deputies. The most senior of them, Dalrymple¹³, spent most of the war at headquarters as an active second in command, sending out orders on a variety of subjects and often making emergency arrangements, such as those for the evacuation of the sick back into Portugal during both the re-alignment of late 1809 and the retreat of 1812. During Bisset's illness in September 1812 and Kennedy's absence from the army in early 1814 Dalrymple acted as head of the department with perfect success, and in general his duties were those of an assistant to the Commissary-General rather than related to any single branch of service. His direct subordinates in the field were the Deputies appointed to supervise independent bodies of men larger than divisions¹⁴. These appointments were as temporary as the formations to which they were attached such as the force sent into Estremadura with Beresford in 1811, the troops left at Madrid in 1812 or the three 'columns' in the Pyrenees and south of France, and it cannot be said that any permanent chain of command existed in the field whereby the Commissary-General's orders descended through Deputies to the divisional commissaries. Such only appeared under exceptional circumstances like those mentioned above when distance or difficulties of terrain made it impossible for a personal direction over the divisions to be exercised from headquarters. Moving from the field to the depots there is again no evidence of any permanent posts intermediate between the Commissary-General and the individual depot commissaries although some control over the stations in their vicinity was exercised by the most senior of the depot officers, the Deputies who commanded at the great base depots of Lisbon, Figueira, Coimbra and Oporto¹⁵. Direct authority over the inland depots was retained by the

12. Temporary acting Assistants were not necessarily senior to Deputy Assistants. The seniority seems to have depended on their posting. Thus McNaughten as commissary to the 3rd division in 1812 was deemed by Bisset senior to Streephan, posted as commissary to one of the brigades, although he was only a Deputy Assistant while Streephan was an acting Assistant. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41. Various letters of early 1812.

13. He was promoted Commissary-General on the 29th January 1812.

14. The 2nd division was exceptional in being, as we have seen, a Deputy's command and a permanent formation.

15. John Mackenzie at Oporto was an Assistant acting as a Deputy. The reason he was not promoted was that he lacked the requisite length of service. When the army moved its base to the north coast of Spain, naturally the relative importance of the depots altered and Deputies were employed at Santander and St. Jean de Luz. P.R.O. W.O. 57/42 Kennedy to Herries, 18th August 1813.

Commissary-General except in the south where he exercised control at least over the forward depots through the Deputy attached to the force in Estremadura.

Thus the Deputies only partly acted as a layer of the hierarchy separating the Commissary-General from direct contact with the lower ranks. Some of their time was also spent carrying out particular assignments apart from the day to day running of commissariat affairs. Ogilvie's peninsular career (although, like Mackenzie, he could not be promoted Deputy until 1812, he served in that capacity from 1809 onwards) well illustrates this as, interspersed with more regular jobs he also bought barley in south Spain at the end of 1809, set up and inspected depots on the Mondego at the end of 1812, was in charge of cattle buying near Braganza in early 1813 and paid the army's debts in the rear of its advance to the Pyrenees later in the year, these various activities occupying nine of his fifty two months' active service in the period covered by this study. D.C.G. Boyes too, before going on leave in the summer of 1812, had himself been responsible for obtaining a cattle supply from the region north of his station at Iamego, and when he did return home did so under orders to procure "machines for weighing live cattle"¹⁶. Transport was another branch of the service that occasionally threw up senior administrative tasks, and thus we find D.C.G. Thomson responsible for organising the forwarding of supplies to Beresford in the Albuera campaign, or D.C.G. Aylmer in charge of a quantity of apparently spare carts in the advance of 1813. Naturally not all special assignments were handled by Deputies - one need cite only A.C.G. Purcell's mission to the Azores or Mr Lefevre's provision buying duties in late 1810¹⁷ - but it does seem that, with the exception of the permanent posts already mentioned, the exact nature of a Deputy's responsibility depended on the immediate needs of the service, that they were given the most immediately important duties and that as changing circumstances altered the priorities so they could expect re-appointment to the posts of new importance. Thus the hierarchy of ranks at the disposal of the Commissary-General was not arranged as a pyramid but as a succession of cooperative duties.

16. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134. Herries to Kennedy, 19th August 1812.

17. See chapter III for these occasions.

Before considering further some features of the internal organisation of the department which contributed to bringing about this state of affairs, there remains to be noticed one more aspect of commissariat service which, although in its detail no longer of more than an antiquarian interest, is nonetheless, because of its universal application and time consuming character, of central importance in any assessment of the department's performance in the war. Every commissary having public stores or money entrusted to him was required to submit accounts showing precisely to what use they had been put and in addition to accompany his accounts with the necessary vouchers to prove the truth of the information. Thus when supplies were bought locally not only had the receipts to be presented showing the precise nature of the transaction but the price paid for the articles had to be certified as fair by two magistrates of the locality, in a separate document¹⁸. The execution of the Treasury's instructions respecting accounting was guaranteed by the practice of holding the commissary personally responsible for whatever he failed to account for unless he could show sufficient reason for his exoneration. Thus the important features of the accounting system as far as the functioning of the department in the field was concerned were firstly that the commissary was personally interested in the completeness of his accounts and secondly that, in days before carbon paper or the calculator, the accounts took a great deal of time to compile. The accompanying figure lists all the separate returns and accounts field and depot commissaries had to make up and present: when it is remembered that most of them represented an agglomeration of small events, each with its own set of vouching documents and often requiring also the conversion of foreign currency, weights and measures into English equivalents, it will be seen how many hours work this purely administrative task represented for the officers of the department¹⁹. In practice the bulk of the accounts were always greatly in arrear as it was often as much as the officers could do to keep abreast of the daily statements required of them and which were sent to the Commissary-General purely for his information.

18. This stringent requirement had often to be relaxed in practice. The word 'magistrate' could be construed to refer to any respectable inhabitant, and in view of the language difficulty it is probable that many of the signatories had no good idea what they were signing. Many accounts had finally to be accepted though lacking complete vouchers, and no doubt many also whose vouchers were no true proof of the transactions they accompanied. P.R.O. 58/132. Herries to Dickens, 20th January 1812.

19. The loss of man-hours was even greater when it is considered that the accounts had to be delivered, at Lisbon or headquarters, by a commissariat employee, and were not to be entrusted to the post. N.A.M. Acc 6807-22. Department Orders para 12.

RETURNS & ACCOUNTS TO BE SUBMITTED BY COMMISSARIAT ACCOUNTANTS (Early 1813)

Daily

Daily state of provisions
& forage
(Field Commissaries)

Daily return of receipts
& issues
(Depot Commissaries)

Monthly

Complete cash and store accounts
with vouchers.

Entry and Issue books (kept by
store-keepers)
(Depot Commissaries)

Abstract of issues to Portuguese
personnel with vouchers.

Abstract of issues to Spanish
personnel.

Abstract of extra rations issued
to General Officers.

Abstract of short issues to men
and horses.
(Field Commissaries)

Detailed receipts, issues and
remains of field & camp equipment
with vouchers.

Return of all clothing issues for
which the regiments are chargeable.

Send department pay estimates
to Lisbon.

Report to Lisbon any accounts
still overdue, with explanation.

Return all arrivals of boats.

Weekly

Weekly return of provisions & forage.
(Field Commissaries)

Detailed return of issues.
(Depot Commissaries)

Return of field and camp equipment.
(Depot Commissaries)

Return of men and animals drawn for
by staff officers.

List of drafts made upon the Deputy
Paymaster-General.

Report of work performed by hired mules.

Occasional

Return of meat supplied from each
'lot' as consumed.

Rations issued to mules to be entered
in the capataz's register whenever
such issue takes place.

Short delivery of rations by mule
brigades to be marked upon their
certificate of last payment.

Copies of abstracts of bat & forage
money and staff pay to be transmitted
'regularly'.

Twice weekly return of money held by
Deputy Paymaster-General.
(Senior officers at depots)

Schedule of bills drawn for the
payment of transport, whenever
directed.

Account of cars hired on regiments'
behalf whenever such hiring takes
place.

Twice monthly return of hired boats.

The accounts of the individual commissaries were submitted first to the Commissary-General's office, for most of the war under the charge of D.C.G. Vaux, where they were compiled into a grand account between the Commissary-General and the Treasury, and passed thence to the officers of the accounts branch of the commissariat for examination. The processes of compilation and examination, with every error or omission having to be referred back to an already overburdened commissary on active service for explanation, were lengthy. For example, Kennedy's cash and store accounts for 1810 were only submitted to D.C.G. Dickens, in charge of the accounts department, in the early part of 1813, and even despite this delay it is probable that Dickens' men were not able to grant them immediate attention since in the previous September they had been engaged in scrutinising the accounts of Purveyors and Paymasters-General and had only got as far as the year 1810²⁰. The delay was partly the result of understaffing, Mr Vaux's office in particular having been almost denuded of clerks by Bisset during 1812 to meet the demands of the field army, but arose mainly from the complexity of the regulations and the laborious nature of the accounting methods employed. Even double entry book-keeping seems to have been an art unpractised in the Peninsula²¹. The inefficiency of the system is evident in that it required four separate stages to encompass only two processes, namely the compiling and checking of the accounts. Kennedy proffered a helpful suggestion in March 1813. After noticing that his Egyptian accounts of 1802 were still not passed by the Comptrollers, he proposed that each sub-accountant should be responsible to the Treasury directly for money and stores held by him, rather than, as previously, coming under the overall responsibility of the Commissary-General. This attempt to transfer the burden from the field to London met with no response and Kennedy's frustration at the impeding of the service as well as concern at the magnitude of his personal responsibility showed themselves plainly in his later representation on the subject. "I trust" he wrote, "that my suggestions will . . . receive a cool and impartial consideration before they are finally rejected²²". We shall later be considering the divided loyalty that his circumstances

20. The ultimate settlement of these accounts was of course in the hands of the Treasury, via its subordinate boards, the Comptrollers of Army Accounts (for stores accounts) and the Auditors of Public Accounts (for cash accounts), and took a very long time indeed. Commissary-General Murray who handed over the Peninsular command in June 1810 did not receive his final clearance until 6th March 1826! P.R.O. A.01 569/459.

21. "No books by double-entry were kept in the Peninsula, but to the want of this check may be ascribed much of the confusion of Account which was manifest on that service". Routh, op.cit. p 62.

22. P.R.O. W.O. 57/42. Kennedy to Herries, 5th December 1813.

imposed upon a commissary. Certainly the question of accounting tended to widen the gap always apparent between the men in the field and their superiors at home, the former necessarily assigning the highest priority to their executive duties, the latter to retaining a real control over expenditure.

The accounts branch of the commissariat, like the stores branch, was subordinate to the Commissary in Chief and both sections were organised in the same way as regarded ranks, discipline and promotion. In the attempt to reduce the evils of patronage and guarantee the competence of officers holding more senior ranks, Colonel Gordon had instituted a system of promotion whereby a certain minimum time must be spent in possession of each rank before the holder became eligible for the next one. Thus a clerk must have served for at least a year before becoming a Deputy Assistant and thereafter four years (or one year if he had been four years a clerk) before promotion to Assistant. Similarly the Assistants had to wait five years (or two years on top of a total of eight years from entry) before it was possible for them to rise to Deputy, in which rank a minimum of three years had to be passed. While this procedure may have had some effect in enabling the Commissary in Chief to resist pressure from patrons²³, it did not guarantee the superior talents of high ranking officers for the reason that a year's experience in the field was more valuable than five years in England when it came to carrying out the Peninsula service. Yet the promotion system made no allowance for experience, only for length of service. Wellington criticised these regulations in November 1810²⁴ as tending to restrict the power to promote on merit and more seriously as placing a premium on those sedentary skills acquired before 1809 by the only officers of sufficiently long service to be eligible for promotion. The system however survived the remonstrances of the Commander of the Forces and Ogilvie, the man he wished to promote to Deputy²⁵, did not receive the step until the 22nd March 1812, five years to the day after his appointment as an Assistant. Later Kennedy was prevented from making an early promotion

23. Although it may be observed that the existence of the system did not prevent Thomas Forth Winter, made a Deputy Assistant on the 16th November 1811, being promoted Assistant on the 29th April 1812.

24. B.M. Add Mss 49481 f.137, Wellington to Gordon, 6th November 1810.

25. Wellington even suggested Ogilvie as the man most fit to succeed Kennedy if the need arose.

in the case of John Mackenzie. Thus in this case we can again see a certain lack of awareness among the authorities in England of the peculiar difficulties of the Peninsular service and their unwillingness to adapt previously established practice to the requirements of field duty.

The rigidity of the promotion system helps to account for the mixture of ranks which, as we have already noticed, were found performing similar duties in the commissariat. A meritorious officer who could not be promoted could at least be appointed according to his abilities and deserts, thereby circumventing the possibly stultifying effects of the promotion regulations. In any case these stultifying effects have been much exaggerated. It is evident from the dates of promotions that, contrary to the implication of Wellington's letter, there was no queue of deserving officers anxiously awaiting the tardy date appointed for their promotion. Indeed I have only found for certain two Peninsular officers (Messrs Ogilvie and Gauntlett) who were advanced immediately upon their becoming eligible, all other promotions above the rank of Deputy Assistant going to men who had been available for advancement for some months at least²⁶. Where cases do come to light of officers apparently deserving reward yet being passed over, the cause is usually not to be found in the regulations. Mr Kirton, for example, a clerk, was recommended for promotion by General Hill in September 1809 but was deemed too young by Commissary-General Murray. In 1811 Ogilvie recommended him to Kennedy who would not forward the request because of the arrears in the clerk's accounts and Kirton served the entire war as a clerk despite filling a succession of responsible though subordinate posts with energy and efficiency. By the regulations he could have been promoted after a year's service²⁷. Augustus Schaumann too, well known as the writer of a lively memoir, was employed as a clerk in the Peninsula from 1808 onwards and, particularly during 1809, on important and difficult duties which he appears to have executed successfully, and yet he was not promoted Deputy Assistant until December 1812. If Wellington's expressed ideal of promotion by merit was imperfectly realised in the Peninsular commissariat the fault lay not only with restrictive regulations but also

26. In the case of Adams, promoted Deputy on the 4th May 1813, the gap is a mere seven weeks but normally it is very much longer.

27. To be fair, at the time Kirton's claims were again rejected, not only were his accounts in arrear but the accusation that he had unduly falsified his receipts for meat had not been rebutted. The time it took him to live down this suggestion probably explains his being passed over subsequently.

with internal jealousies and frictions that prevented promotion going always to the most deserving.

While it appears that promotion was not always the reward of good service, it is also true that, as far as can be judged, such promotions as were made were bestowed worthily, certainly above the rank of Deputy Assistant²⁸. The early appointments to the new rank of Deputy Assistant in 1810 were a rather more mixed bag. Twenty four Peninsular officers were affected, of whom eleven were promoted Assistants fairly soon after becoming eligible the following year. All these eleven seem to have given satisfaction in various posts. Notable among them were Purcell who reportedly satisfied General Craufurd's exacting taste as commissary to the light division in 1810 and later went on a confidential mission to the Azores, St. Remy in command of the important depot at Lamego during the 1812 campaign and Wilkinson the second in command to the Deputy supervising the 2nd division in 1811/12. The remainder, although including Francis McDonnell who was the recipient in July 1810 of an excellent testimonial from no less critical a judge than General Picton, contained two undoubtedly bad choices in Peter Berard, described by General Fane as "one of the most useless persons I ever met with"²⁹ and dismissed in 1812 for embezzling stores, and Ignacius Wechinger, an offensive boorish man who repeatedly proved himself too stupid to be entrusted with any independent responsibility whatever³⁰. The appointment of these men was entirely in the hands of the Treasury but it is obvious that the recommendation of the Commissary-General was seriously attended to. Of the fourteen Peninsula clerks who had held

28. Of the fourteen promotions to Deputy of officers serving in the Peninsula that took place between Spring 1809 and the end of 1813, five appear to have been well justified by the subsequent performance of the officers, about eight I lack the information to judge and only one may have been a liability in so high a rank.

29. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17908, Fane to Ogilvie, 19th August 1810.

30. He wrote in 1813 "I suppose this station will be brack up, no more suppleis are passing this way & very seldom a Detachment on their way to the army..." This quotation demonstrates not merely his imperfect grasp of English spelling and grammar but more significantly his incompetence since it was written before his depot had begun to handle the great proportion of the traffic for which it had been established. It only appeared denuded to him as he had been sending supplies in the wrong direction. Ibid No 17969, Wechinger to Ogilvie, 25th July 1813.

local Acting Assistant status in the autumn of 1809³¹ no fewer than twelve were included in the appointment of Deputy Assistants, six subsequently achieving the rapid jump to Assistant in August the next year. The remaining dozen of the twenty four new Deputy Assistants who served in the Peninsula during 1810 were all save three sent to Portugal after October 1809 so there would not have been time for their promotion to have been earned by service in the field. Murray must therefore be acquitted of blame for the appointments of Wechinger and Berard. Notably the three ordinary clerks in the Peninsular department who also obtained promotion (Carey, St. Remy and Filder) themselves became Assistants in August 1811. Thus a total of nine of the eleven officers finding rapid promotion had enjoyed early experience of the Peninsular service which suggests both, not surprisingly, the value of practical experience and more importantly the realistic spirit which governed the choice of who to promote in the lower ranks as well as in the higher.

Besides promoting good officers it was naturally necessary to reinforce the department from time to time. As the size of the army increased, and as the British commissariat took on a greater share of responsibility for the Portuguese system, the number of commissaries needed grew too. The increase in the department's establishment however more than allowed for the growth of the army. In October 1809 thirty three officers and acting officers were supplying an army of about 30,000 men. A year later the army had expanded by at least a third but the commissariat by two thirds to fifty seven officers, while in 1812 a force of rather more than 45,000 men was served by as many as eighty seven commissariat officers³². Thus had the officer establishment been adequate at the start it might have remained adequate as the war proceeded, but unfortunately the department began the war so very understaffed that all the increases in the officer establishment could do no more than enable it to keep pace with its duties. The 1809 figure of thirty three officers contains no fewer than eighteen who are styled acting Assistants, men substantially clerks holding officers' posts,

31. There were sixteen listed but one, Petken, was under arrest and another, Downie, left to join the Spanish army, so neither were eligible for appointment as a Deputy Assistant.

32. Since the proportion of cavalry with the army increased somewhat between 1809 and 1812, this meant more work for the commissariat than appears from the bare total. Nonetheless the real increase in officers is apparent enough.

and besides these there must have been many clerks without that appointment doing officers' duty as thirty three men is not enough to go round the number of jobs available³³. This practice of employing clerks to supply deficiencies in the officer establishment lasted throughout the war and resulted in subdivisions within the grade of clerk whereby the already existing distinction which paid clerks 5/- or 7/6d a day according to their seniority was widened by the introduction of a 10/- per day rate for a clerk acting as an officer, while the 5/- (or sometimes 4/6d) remuneration was kept only for men, many of them locals or literate soldiers borrowed from the army, who bore no responsibility and executed only office duties. The total number of clerks employed in the Peninsula rose from twenty in spring 1809, to forty five in the autumn, to two hundred and fifty five in 1812, but a large proportion of this increase must have been in the junior category and not all of the 1812 clerks can be regarded as potential officer or acting officer material.

Despite the good performance of many of the acting officers, shortage of manpower in the upper ranks became a serious problem in 1812 when such exceptional demands were made upon the department's activity. Even as early as the 11th June 1811 Gordon had been obliged to resort to the expedient of selecting twelve temporary acting Assistants from the army in an effort to get round the illegality of receiving anyone directly into the commissariat at a rank higher than that of clerk³⁴. Evidently this measure did not prove very satisfactory as nine months later Bisset complained and had to be assured he could send them home again if he wanted. By the end of 1811 not far short of a half of all officers commissioned in the commissariat were serving in the Peninsula, but even so the 1812 campaign brought forth constant complaints from Spain about lack of officers and repeated demands for more assistance. "I have subjected the Home Service to some inconvenience," wrote Herries on the 12th October 1812 regarding his decision to let a few more officers from the British establishment sail for Lisbon, "as many of the districts will be left without a Commissary..³⁵ Fortunately the

33. Of the thirty three men four were sick, one only employed in making up his old accounts, four more held office jobs to do with current accounting and one was under arrest. This left twenty three officers to fill about thirty posts with infantry brigades, cavalry regiments and depots apart from supervising other aspects of the service. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17902 Return of Commissariat Officers in Spain and Portugal, Badajoz September 1809.

34. P.R.O. W.O. 58/130 Gordon to Kennedy, 11th June 1811.

35. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134 Herries to Kennedy, 12th October 1812.

demands of 1812 upon manpower were never so seriously repeated. The shortage of officers in the field during the summer of 1812 by comparison with earlier and later years does appear in the few figures which are preserved. Thus in 1810 eight officers and senior clerks controlled twenty three assorted subordinates with the 2nd division, while in late 1813 five men of officer status commanded sixty two other employees with the 6th division. In August 1812 the same 6th division was reduced to two officers and one senior clerk among its commissariat staff of fifty eight. The depot at Salamanca too, where the commissariat employed fifty seven people, was run by a Deputy with only a single clerk to help him in October 1812.

With respect to the non-commissioned grades the situation was easier because the commissariat had not only the rank and file of the army but also the indigenous population to call upon for recruits. Some such employees were also provided from England³⁶. The Victualling Board sent a number of coopers in response to a request from Kennedy and these men seem to have remained in service until the end of the war in spite of their return being requested in April 1813³⁷. Help from home was also sought over the conductor establishment, Wellington and Bisset asking for fifty in the summer of 1812. The Treasury agreed to their employment on the 18th June but Herries had some difficulty in finding suitably qualified men prepared to undertake the work for 5/- per day and all were not assembled until the end of July³⁸. Nor was their assemblage the end of the matter as five subsequently declined the appointment upon their duties being more fully explained to them, presumably having only been interested in the five guinea advance of wages which none was able to repay, and another, Edward Bell, got as far as Portsmouth where he "exhibited evident signs of insanity and was sent back to London"³⁹. His equipment and travel expenses had cost

36. The establishment of British non-commissioned employees in spring 1809 was 30 bakers, 6 coopers, 6 bricklayers, 4 blacksmiths and farriers and 4 carpenters and wheelwrights. P.R.O. W.O. 57/2, Harrison to Murray, 8th April 1809.

37. P.R.O. W.O. 58/57 Herries to Commissioners of Victualling 24th April 1813.

38. "It is scarcely necessary for me to point out to you the difficulties which present themselves in prevailing upon persons of the description which would be suitable to this employment to undertake it". P.R.O. W.O. 58/132 Herries to Bisset, 2nd July 1812.

39. P.R.O. W.O. 57/5, Harrison to Herries, 3rd November 1812.

the Treasury £21 8/8d. One of the remaining forty four recruits kept a journal⁴⁰ which shows that he arrived at Lisbon on the 11th September 1812, thence proceeding via Ciudad Rodrigo to the front. On the 25th November he drafted a letter of resignation but appears to have got over his grievance and settled down comparatively happily in winter quarters. By December he was able to be entrusted with the sole superintendence of small mule convoys. Useful though these men must have proved it is evident that they arrived too late to be more than bewildered spectators of the final stages of the campaign of 1812. The further hundred conductors requested by Kennedy at the end of the year and probably sent in January 1813 must also have needed time to acclimatise. In any case it is apparent that England never provided more than the smaller part of the manpower for these junior grades.

The regiments of the army supplied a large number of men for the non-commissioned grades in the commissariat, in particular to do jobs like conducting stores, keeping stores, 'writing' and making issues. Most returns do not include these men and any guess as to their total number would be hazardous, but it is obvious they were in evidence from very early in the war and often served for long periods in their new capacity. Thus the head butcher to Hinde's brigade, 6th division, in August 1812 had been appointed originally from the 53rd foot in April 1809 and the storekeeper (7th fusileers) in 1810. Altogether the brigade was served by eight soldiers, drawn from six different regiments, among the twenty six junior employees of its commissariat staff. The companion brigade, Hulse's, employed only three soldiers out of twenty nine, one of which trio, a conductor from the 2nd foot, had been first appointed in 1809. This use of soldiers for commissariat duty was not a phenomenon confined to the 6th division although better documented there than elsewhere. O'Meara at Cadiz used two sergeants, Moore and Cameron, as 'military clerks' to pay the working parties helping with the fortifications⁴¹. In Portugal two conductors dismissed in 1811 for neglect and intoxication are specified as military men, a corporal and a private in the 11th Veteran battalion⁴². The Englishmen seem mostly to

40. N.A.M. Acc 7508-24. Notebook belonging to commissariat conductor Morris.

41. These two were employed in 1810. They had to be dismissed later for faking the returns of employment and stealing the money. O'Meara pointedly replaced them with Spaniards rather to the indignation of the Treasury who insisted they be laid off as soon as their particular service was terminated.

42. P.R.O. W.O. 57/39, Dunmore to Gordon, 20th July 1811.

have been employed in the jobs of rather higher status, although their pay as butchers for example was as low as 1/6d a day, and they were not expected to serve as labourers or drivers. Naturally for these duties where knowledge of English was not a necessary qualification it was sensible to employ locals and this increasingly became commissariat practice.

The small size of the 'tail' in commissariat employ that the British army dragged behind it in the Peninsula is sometimes the subject of surprised comment. Fortescue's 719 employees in the summer of 1812 is often quoted in this context⁴³, though it misleads by taking little account of the large amount of local labour that the department seems always to have employed. Precise numbers are of course hard to obtain but one list exists, dated 10th September 1811, being a return of the Portuguese inhabitants employed by the British commissariat in Portugal⁴⁴. The number of men listed is 1,254 and to this figure should be added the officers, clerks, borrowed soldiers and British non-commissioned employees as well as the unnumbered Spaniards employed to give an accurate tale of the strength of the Peninsular commissariat⁴⁵. Most of the local labour was quite unskilled and need not detain us long: the categories of muleteer, driver, carman, labourer, domestic servant and herdsman account for 973 of the above total, and are divided in small groups among all the eight infantry divisions, nine cavalry regiments, guns, headquarters and most of the principal depots of Portugal⁴⁶. Some of the remainder however occupied quite senior positions, 41 as clerks, 124 as conductors and 26 as storekeepers. These were the people described by Larpent as "roguish Portuguese under-commissaries"⁴⁷ and this rather prejudiced view was echoed in England where Herries felt that "it is undoubtedly a matter of the first consideration that preference should be given to British subjects in all Employments connected with the Commissariat"⁴⁸. Foreigners (Spanish or Portuguese foreigners that is) seem to have stood

43. J W Fortescue, R.A.S.C. vol I p 92.

44. Arquivo Historico Militar, Lisbon. Divisao 1, Seccao 14, Caixa 48, Num 1 f.46. The list was originally enclosed with Wellington to Stuart 12th September 1811. See the Despatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington ed J Gurwood 12 vols 1834-8, vol VIII p 274.

45. Most of the muleteers were Spanish and even only counting those serving with the 'public' mules they must have numbered several hundred.

46. No-one is shown serving at depots as prominent as Abrantes, Celorico or Lamego which is surprising and suggests that the list may be incomplete.

47. The Private Journal of F.S. Larpent ed G Larpent, 2 vols 1853. Vol 1 letter of 6th October 1812.

48. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 15th December 1812.

little chance of promotion though Kennedy did point out in August 1813 that any positive veto on their advancement could only have had a bad effect on morale and recruiting alike⁴⁹. Since, as we have seen, there were difficulties in supplying men from England, and since it was undesirable to denude the fighting units further than was necessary, the opposition to the employment of locals in the most responsible non-commissioned jobs did not prevent the growing prevalence of the phenomenon. A return of the storekeepers at Tarragona in March 1814 includes sixteen unmistakeably Iberian names out of a total of seventeen⁵⁰, while the normal commissariat staff attached to a division shows, parallel to the long term reduction in the numbers and rank of the commissioned officers at the top, a steady growth in the numbers of guides, interpreters, herdsmen and so forth on the payroll, between 1810 and 1814.

To Spanish and Portuguese labour both skilled and unskilled was the commissariat, and with it the army, indebted for enabling it to cope with its ever-increasing duties. The service must have benefited greatly from this practice since the foreigners appointed to responsible posts would have been selected on the basis of their apparent talent for them, whereas in the case of borrowed soldiers the commissariat would have received only those men their commanding officers were prepared to see seconded, while recruits from England were selected by men who had no experience of what their duties would entail and took time to accustom themselves to the country and the language. Many Portuguese must have been recruited in the way Wilkinson describes in the case of a man originally in the employ of a local magistracy and dealing with the supply of bread to British forces near Sobreira Formosa in September 1810. "He was too active and useful to be overlooked," Wilkinson wrote later, "and either Belson or Kirton got him as a foraging conductor"⁵¹. Despite the fact that such capable foreigners as these were not promoted above the rank of clerk, some of them do appear to have been entrusted with posts of sole responsibility from late 1810 onwards. Thus the clerk G. da Silva commanded the depot at Castello Branco

49. In all the new Deputy Assistants appointed between 1810 and 1813 only one name, Fra Leon Chiaranda, appears of an Iberian style. All I know about him is that he was serving at Lisbon in July 1813.

50. P.R.O. W.O. 57/44. Daniell to Herries, 29th March 1814.

51. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17981. Wilkinson to Ogilvie, ? 1827.

in the autumn of 1811 and a Portuguese called Ribeiro was in charge of the Villa Franca magazine in June 1812. Most of the responsible jobs though were executed by British commissaries as a matter of policy rather than by virtue of any superior capacity. Indeed the quality of British clerks recruited into the commissariat during the war years was a matter of recurrent concern to the Commissaries-General and evidently left much to be desired.

Once again it was the demands of the campaign of 1812 that really illuminated the shortcomings of the clerical intake, shortcomings of course caused as much by the lack of any training in Britain which would be relevant to the Peninsular service as by the unsuitability of the candidates themselves, though this too was a subject of complaint⁵². It is not intended to suggest that nothing had been the matter with the intake before 1812. In September 1810 O'Meara had occasion to complain of five clerks recently arrived at Cadiz. Two of these men he admitted, "write a fair enough hand" but one of the others was decrepit from age and wrote badly, another could "scarcely write legibly" and was subject to epileptic fits, whilst the third "almost immediately after his arrival betrayed... strong symptoms of an infirmity of mind"⁵³. Such a worthless reinforcement as this must have been unusual but it is evident that the main army too had found cause for complaint in the first part of the war, for Herries wrote to Bisset at the start of 1812, "I shall in future deal very strictly in the examination of the persons they (the Treasury) appoint (as clerks)"⁵⁴. In spite of this promise the situation seems to have worsened thereafter. Bisset had occasion in the summer to dismiss no fewer than six clerks for various breaches of discipline⁵⁵, Dalrymple, acting for Bisset in September, wrote home citing cases where the service had suffered for want of efficient clerical assistance, and one of Kennedy's first letters upon his return to

52. In his later book Bisset singled out lack of training as one of the chief causes of inefficiency in the field.

53. P.R.O. W.O. 57/13, O'Meara to Gordon, 7th September 1810.

54. Herries to Bisset, 30th January 1812. Quoted in Edward Herries' 'Memoir of the Public Life of the Right Hon. J.C. Herries', London 1880.

55. Two for disobedience, two for "repeated acts of inebriety", one for abandoning his cattle in mid-journey and the sixth for an unspecified offence. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17939 f.42.

the Peninsula in the same month was a complaint of the youth, inexperience and ignorance of the most recently arrived clerks. The point had also been made in a curious way earlier in the year when Wilkinson earned a reprimand for writing to a friend with a private request for 'assistance', viz a man who could write, do accounts, sober, civil and of a strong constitution. One can only assume that some or all of these admirable qualities were too frequently missing in the 'assistance' provided from England⁵⁶.

Why did the problem appear to worsen rather than improve after Herries' institution of an examination for new clerks? He was rather proud of this innovation⁵⁷ though few details are known about the rigour of the questions asked or of the standard of answers required. It appears however that the great demand for men in 1812 rapidly overweighed too strict a consideration of the suitability of an applicant. In reply to an inquiry whether a vacancy could be found, Bisset explained in March that he had no vacancies, he took anybody he could get⁵⁸. Between April 1812 and the end of the year eighty two clerks were sent to Portugal, and at least twenty eight had already arrived since the date of Kennedy's departure. How great a cooperative effort on the Treasury's part this was may be seen by a reference to their attitude in 1808 when "the Treasury had some doubts as to the necessity for sending out so great a number as twelve additional clerks, for whom Sir Robert Kennedy had applied"⁵⁹. Evidently such numbers as these could not be provided without a drop in the quality of the recruits even in the hard economic conditions which prevailed in 1812 in England and during which the security of a government salary must have appeared particularly attractive. Certainly by the end of the war it would seem that a clerkship in the commissariat had risen in social status and was becoming a serious alternative to the more usual army career for gently

56. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132. Herries to Kennedy, 28th March 1812.

57. When Case at Estremoz was made a clerk in the Peninsula Herries sent Bisset a copy of the usual entrance questions with a reference to "the examination I have thought it necessary to have upon every candidate on his admission into the Dep't". Ibid, Herries to Bisset, 24th April 1812.

58. B.M. Add Mss 57377. Bisset to Herries, 15th March 1812.

59. Sir John Bisset 'On Commissariat Service'. Quoted in 'Army Administration' by Major-General Sir Gerald Ellison, Army Quarterly, October 1921.

born but indigent younger sons⁶⁰. There was no shortage of applicants - Herries was pestered throughout 1813/14 with letters requesting admission into the commissariat for some relative or friend of the writer to whom he returned the invariable reply that appointments were entirely in the hands of the Treasury - but this process may have led directly to the prevalence of the 'youth, inexperience and ignorance' that provoked Kennedy to complain⁶¹. The qualities most frequently found and most generally prized among junior regimental officers were not those best suited to commissariat service which needed above all a tireless and accurate attention to detail. The absence of any training preliminary to field service, for which no examination could be a substitute, naturally encouraged an unprofessional approach to the commissariat and gave its recruiting a character more like that of the army than that of the Ordnance department for example. The result was that much time was needed before a new clerk's suitability for responsibility in the Peninsula could be ascertained and it is to this fact as much as to the ~~numerical~~ shortage of officers that the great pressure of work that fell upon the senior or experienced commissaries is to be attributed.

Lack of numbers, absence of any useful preliminary training and the obligation to render detailed accounts of their varied activities all hampered the efficient execution of the commissaries' duties in the Peninsula. Besides these factors there was a more basic flaw in the whole concept of the commissariat as an institution independent of the rest of the army⁶². The effect of this was that every commissary serving with troops had a dual responsibility, to obey the orders of his superiors in the department and to ensure that the dispositions and manoeuvres of the military commander to whom he was attached were as well supported logistically as possible. The problem this division of loyalties could be is clearly expressed in the following extract from a letter sent by D.A.C.G. Dobree to Ogilvie, his

60. The inclusion of the commissariat in the Army List for the first time, in 1812, must have contributed to this tendency.

61. Commissariat clerks may have been generally younger on their first appointment at the end of the war than at the beginning. The average ages at entry of six clerks who joined 1809/11 and six who joined 1812/14 were 24 and 21 respectively which gives some support to Kennedy's criticism, though not in itself a very strong piece of evidence. See Records of Service, N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17916 f.57 seq. 17918 f.24 seq. 17934 f.103, 17935 f.72 seq. and 17978 f.57 seq.

62. This situation was not of course unique to the commissariat, that of the Ordnance department being most similar, but the huge scale of commissariat operations exposed it more obviously I believe here than elsewhere.

direct superior in the commissariat. "I am sorry you should have converted into an ignorance of duty my not obeying directly an order which would have been the cause of the division starving, without first acquainting the General officer who looks to me for supplying it, & stating to him what a helpless situation we should be left in if the whole of our small transport was to be sent to Passages..."⁶³. This kind of appeal to the outside authority of a general cropped up regularly at higher command levels too where it caused much friction. Thus Bisset in the manpower crisis of 1812 ordered O'Meara & Cadiz to send three officers to join the main army and when his instruction was not obeyed, repeated it in a most peremptory way⁶⁴. O'Meara complained to Herries about this treatment and was told that he should have informed the Commissary-General in the first place that General Cooke had sanctioned his refusal to detach the officers, and this, Herries felt, would have closed the issue. Later under rather similar circumstances, Kennedy sent home Wellington's support for his own refusal to detach any officers to strengthen the commissariat of the southern army, with the result that compliance with the order was not insisted upon.

It was thus recognised that in matters directly affecting the field service the control exercised by the department's chiefs over their juniors was necessarily limited by the dictates of efficiency. However in matters of administration and accountancy, in fact in any aspect of the service in which economy could be practised, the directions from above were rigid. This distinction is plainly reflected in the department's standing orders⁶⁵, a booklet comprising sixty articles of which twenty nine are concerned with modes of accounting and reporting, thirteen with details of the manner in which various payments are to be made and a further five deal with minor administrative concerns such as the death or sickness of commissaries and the branding of public mules. Only thirteen out of sixty are even loosely concerned with the contingencies of field service, the general principles of

63. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17952, Dobree to Ogilvie, 22nd December 1813.

64. Not only did he insist on obedience to his commands at Cadiz, he also virtually accused O'Meara of nepotism in the appointment of his cousin to the command of the commissariat at Tarifa. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, Bisset to O'Meara, 11th May 1812.

65. N.A.M. Acc 6807/22. These instructions appear from internal evidence to date from 1813, almost certainly before the advance of the army.

which it was evidently assumed everybody would need to pick up for himself. Obviously a perfect division of commissariat duties between those concerning checks or limitations of spending and those concerned with ensuring the arrival of sufficient rations at the right time and place cannot be made since money was a ubiquitous element. What may be said is that, subject to the 'rules' of accounting, the Treasury and the Commissary in Chief left to the Commissary-General and the army commander all details of administration and field operations⁶⁶. Even in the realm of finance, as will be seen in chapter IV, the Treasury used their authority with caution. Matters such as the siting of depots, the organising of transport, the provenance of the supplies⁶⁷, appointments within the Peninsula, the apportionment of cash among the different services and the maintaining of whatever reserves of provisions were deemed necessary were all decided by the Commissary-General in consultation with Wellington. At a lower level the field commissaries partook somewhat of this freedom, being often (though not always) at liberty to make any reasonable arrangements that would ensure the supply of their unit⁶⁸ and to allocate their transport and subordinate staff as seemed best to them.

It is evident that the relationship between the Commander of the Forces and the Commissary-General was of central importance to the effective running of the department while that between the Commissary-General and the Commissary in Chief was rather less so. During Wellington's command of the armies from 1809 to 1814, four men served him as Commissary-General at headquarters, Messrs John Murray (until June 1810), Robert Hugh Kennedy (until December 1811 and again from October 1812 onwards), John Bisset (December 1811 to August 1812) and Charles Dalrymple as deputy for Bisset in September 1812 and for Kennedy in January and February 1814. Despite these changes in the command, continuity rather than change is evident in the basic system from spring 1810 onwards, this reflecting partly Wellington's

66. As will be seen in chapter VII the basic system employed by Wellington was called into question at home during the war but never by anything more imperative than an alternative suggestion.

67. Supplies were rarely sent from England unasked and never without the Commissary-General being consulted as to his wishes. Only the decision to supply the troops principally from the United Kingdom during the last nine months of the war was taken in England.

68. Field commissaries were told which depots they must draw from. They were also instructed as to the amount of reserve they were required to keep in hand and were sometimes prohibited from procuring items locally if the depot supply was more cheaply available. They were also often restricted in the prices they could offer for goods.

consistent attention to the details of commissariat business and partly the fact that Bisset for his tenure of the command was conscious that he was deputising for Kennedy and did not wish to make more changes than he felt essential. Thus it was the relations between Wellington and Kennedy that were the most important to the operations of the department, and it is clear that these were cordial. Wellington had wanted Kennedy as Commissary-General on his return to Portugal in 1809, though in the event the appointment was delayed for over a year, and his irritation at Kennedy's return to England at the end of 1811 makes it plain that the two men had indeed co-operated successfully⁶⁹. Perhaps the reason why Wellington and Kennedy agreed together so well was their common love of system. This phenomenon is well documented in the case of Wellington; it also appears in Kennedy's fury at the relatively minor changes introduced by Bisset, where he had obviously assumed, from Bisset's expressing a liking for his, Kennedy's, system, that not one iota of it would be lost when he returned. The same trait in Kennedy's character is revealed by Routh's unwillingness to have the Commissary-General aware that he had "been suggesting any improvements in what he of course deems perfect because it is old"⁷⁰. However that may be, the allies owed much for their success in the Peninsula to the good working relationship between Wellington and Kennedy, a circumstance only worthy of remark because of the poor relations that existed between Kennedy and almost everyone else in his own department.

That Kennedy was disliked by many of his senior subordinates was no doubt unfortunate but while all did their duty little harm can be seen to have come to the service. However his feuds with Herries and Bisset both produced some harmful results⁷¹. It is not surprising that the energetic and alert Herries succeeding Colonel Gordon, who had taken his overseas responsibilities in a nonchalant spirit, should have infuriated Kennedy,

69. Wellington also worked well with Bisset during Kennedy's absence and gave 'favourable public testimonials' as to the Commissary-General's services. That these were more than empty compliments can be seen from his treatment of Pipon. See Supplementary Despatches and Memoranda of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington ed. the 2nd Duke of Wellington, 1858-72, vol VI p.188.

70. B.M. Add Mss 57415, William Herries to Herries, 17th October 1813.

71. I cannot trace the origin of Kennedy's dislike of Herries. A letter to Herries of 1807 refers to 'your friend Mr Kennedy' implying that the hostility began at a later date, but the sense could easily be ironical. B.M. Add Mss 57375, Drummond to Herries, ? 1807.

a suspicious man in any case and jealous of his own authority. One of the early acts of the new Commissary in Chief was to observe in February 1812 the absence of any returns of camp equipage for later than July 1811. He pointed out (correctly) that Kennedy had misunderstood his instructions⁷² and on being shown a return of later date which Kennedy happened to have in his pocket when he returned on leave criticised its accuracy, the local purchase of shoes and blankets which it disclosed and an assortment of other inefficiencies: "I perceive that there were on 14th March at Lisbon 81 tents & 140 poles; at Abrantes 88 tents & 232 poles & at Bucellas 329 tents and no poles. - Under the head of canteens I perceive that there were at Lisbon 14,474 canteens & 1,548 straps; at Coimbra 797 canteens and 6,429 straps & that in no depot the number of canteens & straps are the same"⁷³. These were fair criticisms perhaps but it is easy to see why they offended Kennedy coming from a civilian with no knowledge of conditions in the field and only three months in his job⁷⁴. Subsequently when Herries took Bisset's part in the dispute between the two Commissaries-General, bad relations between the two men were confirmed.

Herries' eagerness to keep abreast of events in the field and his desire to make the authority of the Commissary in Chief practically felt overseas manifested themselves in his bad habit of communicating with subordinate officers behind Kennedy's back. The first occasion might be dismissed as merely a misunderstanding. The Board of Trade requiring some information about the state of the magazines at Lisbon and the volume of trade passing through the port, Herries wrote for information to D.C.G. Pipon rather than to headquarters in order to save time. Kennedy, angry, neatly revenged himself by stigmatising Pipon's report as "completely at variance with the real facts"⁷⁵ yet declining, in spite of further invitation, to enlarge upon this comment, with the result that Herries had to produce before the Board figures which he knew to be erroneous without being able to point out in what respect they wandered from the truth. The next affair was

72. "It is not enough to send 3 returns in a period of nine months they should be sent three monthly"; P.R.O. W.O. 58/132 Herries to Kennedy, 20th June 1812.

73. Ibid, Herries to Bisset, 20th April 1812.

74. Kennedy had to be soothed after reacting ill to the criticisms by being told he was "a meritorious officer of tried character and abilities". Ibid, Herries to Kennedy, 11th June 1812.

75. Herries' phraseology; P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 19th January, 1813.

rather more serious. Herries, lacking up to date information of the progress and requirements of the army in the Vitoria campaign, wrote to Santander for speedy information about the state of supplies. Ogilvie returned him an extensive report earning himself thereby a furious rebuke from Kennedy. The Commissary-General's public reason for his anger was that Ogilvie's report would misstate the real circumstances and mislead the home authorities: "it appears from the letter itself that such correspondence can only lead to error" he wrote, purporting to paraphrase Wellington's opinion⁷⁶. Herries was not convinced. "The information you transmitted to me", he informed Ogilvie, "has not only not been the occasion of any improper step on this side, but on the contrary has been materially useful to us in some respects in which we have not received such explicit accounts from any other quarters"⁷⁷. Much though one must sympathise with the Commissary in Chief in his desire for prompt information where to send supplies and in what quantity at such an important strategical juncture, he cannot on these grounds be exonerated from the charge of impropriety since his correspondence with Ogilvie was of several months' standing before the Santander letter came to Kennedy's notice. "I shall be very glad to hear privately from you as often as you can spare a few minutes... how things are going on when you are placed at a distance from Head quarters,"⁷⁸ Herries had written on the 13th February. The unmilitary and undesirable nature of such a correspondence needs no demonstration.

Though Herries was at fault in these cases, most of the ill feeling derived from Kennedy's jealous reaction to any real or imagined encroachments upon his authority. This aspect of his character combined with his habitual selfishness of outlook to produce a violent dispute with John Bisset at the end of 1812. Kennedy's ultimate intention to return to the Peninsula when he departed in 1811 and his unwillingness to make over his authority to his successor had led to an arrangement whereby Bisset carried

76. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17936, Ogilvie to Kennedy, 2nd October 1813, with reply of 8th October in margin. Ogilvie had to send copies of all his correspondence with the Commissary in Chief and when he asked whether in future he might obey Herries' orders regarding reports he was told "that you may be under no mistake as to my meaning I order you not to communicate with the Commissary in Chief under any circumstances except through me". Wellington also reprimanded both Ogilvie and Herries on this occasion.

77. Ibid, Herries to Ogilvie, 27th October 1813.

78. Ibid, No 17914 f.13, Herries to Ogilvie, 13th February 1813.

on the service in Kennedy's name and not at his own responsibility. Thus the customary transfer of stores and provisions from the account of the departing Commissary-General to that of his successor did not take place on Bisset's assumption of control. Naturally it was found impossible that Kennedy could from England continue to exercise any useful authority over affairs in Spain and naturally again, 1812 being a most active and eventful year for the army, it was necessary for Bisset to make various alterations in the commissariat arrangements to meet changing circumstances⁷⁹. On his return to Portugal, already annoyed by Bisset's independence of action in the meantime, Kennedy refused to hold himself accountable for expenditure during Bisset's term as Commissary-General and ordered him, instead of proceeding to Gibraltar as instructed by the Treasury, to wait in Spain and make up his accounts for the period in question. A most acrimonious exchange of letters ensued between the two men: Wellington's offer of mediation, welcomed by Bisset, was refused by Kennedy. The unanimous verdict of Herries, the Treasury and the Commissioners of Audit was that "Sir R. Kennedy must be considered the accountant to the Public in the 1st Inst'ce for all the Expend're incurred in the Comm'riat Departm't in the Peninsula during his absence upon leave"⁸⁰. "I am fixed with Mr Bisset's accounts"⁸¹ wrote Kennedy, but it is impossible to imagine any other decision in view of the arrangements he himself had put in writing earlier in the year⁸². It is hard not to feel sympathy with anyone subjected to the risks involved in accounting to the public especially for a service over which he had not exercised personal control. Kennedy however was himself inconsiderate about such matters: only a week after ordering Bisset to prepare accounts for the period of his alleged responsibility he issued an extraordinary order requiring every accountant between Ciudad Rodrigo and headquarters to send in his cash and store accounts up to the 24th

79. The changes which seem particularly to have upset Kennedy were the borrowing of clerks for field service from his accounts office, certain promotions recommended by Bisset and a new regulation regarding the issue of rations to General Officers.

80. P.R.O. W.O. 57/5. Harrison to Herries, 5th May 1813.

81. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16930. Kennedy to Ogilvie, 29th April 1813.

82. For example "Mr Bissett entails no responsibility upon himself for the expenditure incurred by my sub-accountants". That admittedly is Herries purporting to quote Kennedy but the absence of any transfer of stores must be conclusive against the possibility, whether just or not, of making Bisset the accountant, since it could never have been established what he was to be accountable for. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132, Kennedy to Herries, 11th March 1812, quoted in Herries to Kennedy, 8th June 1812.

December 1811. Plainly while these were being made up no progress could be made by Bisset trying to compile his own.⁸³ Yet when the need to compile Commissary-General Murray's accounts in 1810 had been adduced as an excuse for the incompleteness of those for the month in progress, Kennedy had brushed it aside. "I cannot allow the current duties to stand still for old accounts"⁸⁴. Evidently it made a difference whose accounts were in question.

These dissensions were naturally harmful to the discipline of the department. Thus the clerk, Morrison, dismissed by Bisset in August 1812 for "repeated acts of inebriety"⁸⁵ took advantage of the dispute between Bisset and Kennedy to ask the returning Commissary-General for reinstatement and appears in fact to have enlisted Kennedy's support for his appeal although there seems no reason for doubting that the punishment had been merited. Kennedy too did his best to keep Bisset in Spain although aware that the Commissary in Chief had ordered him to Gibraltar, and only gave way in the face of a positive direction from Wellington that the instructions as to his posting be obeyed. Bisset having assumed his new command, nobody troubled to inform Herries who discovered by chance that the Gibraltar station was no longer leaderless just in time to prevent the sailing of Commissary-General Drummond, appointed after it had appeared that Bisset was remaining in Spain⁸⁶. From the worst dangers of faction and personal antipathies however the commissariat was protected by the 'dual responsibility' already noticed, by its close association with the army where morale was by this time high and by the ever-present practical demands of its duty that left little time for politics. While Kennedy was not much liked by at least some of his colleagues, there is no evidence to suggest that any cliques formed themselves as a result. That the personal difficulties between Herries and Kennedy did not have a crippling effect upon the service

83. Quite apart from the effect on Bisset, it is curious to find a Commissary-General demanding old accounts from his front line subordinates during a period as critical and busy as the siege of Burgos, and in the face of the possibility of a major retreat which did indeed commence only eight days after the order was issued.

84. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17983, f.74. Kennedy to Ogilvie, 9th July 1810.

85. His habitual drunkenness achieved its zenith at the sacking of Badajoz where he was observed lurching about the streets with a drawn sabre, for which activity he was finally reported to the Commissary-General.

86. Kennedy was obviously amused at this confusion: "Bisset has ... set off in a frigate for Gibraltar - Drummond is also gone to Gibraltar, ordered there by the Commissary in Chief instead of Bisset!!!" Surely he ought to have reported his change of heart regarding Bisset, which took nearly seven weeks to filter back to London. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17970 f.158. Kennedy to Ogilvie, 15th January 1813.

is due to the very different spheres of operations of the two men in spite of the fact that one was nominally the superior of the other. With all Herries' energy it was quite impossible that much direction of affairs in the field could be maintained from London, even with a Commissary-General more informative and docile than Kennedy⁸⁷. Force of circumstance turned much of both men's attention to their own side of the whole task, Kennedy under the immediate supervision of Wellington, and Herries under the Treasury, whose Board took a real interest in the support of the war. Accordingly their dispute was not attended with the grave inconvenience that might be supposed.

Since the department has often been ill-regarded for its standards of integrity and since dishonest practices appear on the face of it to present as great a threat to the efficient execution of its duty as disputes among its senior officers it may be appropriate here to enlarge upon the incidence and importance of peculation. A sequence of frauds and dishonesties can be traced throughout the war, ranging from simple robberies to well-calculated swindles. Straightforward thefts of money, animals or personal baggage might be the work of servants, as in the case of D.A.C.G. Dallas who lost baggage and public documents or Mr Jackson who lost money, or subordinates like the clerk Sabater who stole public money from D.A.C.G. Wilgress in 1813. Naturally such occurrences also took place in the army, but the quantities of public money with which commissaries might be entrusted made them particularly tempting targets. Embezzlement of stores was also generally the work of non-commissioned employees, though one Deputy Assistant, Berard, was dismissed for this offence. More subtle deceptions than these are also known to have been practised, such as the forging of paylists by Messrs Moore and Cameron at Cadiz or the method of Mr Richardson at Merida "fraudulently receiving 5 per cent out of the payments made by him"⁸⁸ but again only subordinate employees seem to have been involved. Although naturally only those crimes which were detected, and probably not all of those, have survived for inspection it seems reasonable to assert that the

87. Thus although Bisset was praised for his 'clear and explicit reports', no more comprehensive instructions were sent to him than to Kennedy. Indeed in April the Treasury returned Bisset's report about the pecuniary state of the army "on which it does not occur to my Lords as necessary to give any directions". P.R.O. W.O. 57/4, Harrison to Herries, 16th March 1812, and 57/5, Harrison to Herries, 9th April 1812.

88. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17972 f.85.

sums of money and value of public property involved were so small as to have no practical effect upon the department's overall operation.⁸⁹ All the sums mentioned in accounts of the cases as lost to the public, though substantial to the low paid individuals involved, are trifling to a larger consideration. D.A.C.G. Head lost 1,210 dollars (say £325) stolen at Celorico, Cameron's share in his swindle is said to have amounted to about £72, Storekeeper Daniel Buckley made £60 from the illicit sale of a pipe of wine and so on. Since all these frauds were carried out by men in subordinate positions it is not surprising to find them, though numerous, so insubstantial, as the opportunities open to such men would have been limited especially if they hoped, as many must, to avoid detection. For any fraud of public significance to occur the connivance of an independently acting commissariat accountant would have been necessary, because he would both have had responsibility for larger quantities of stores or money and have been in a position to attempt to cover up the matter afterwards⁹⁰. It is evident from the various regulations not merely for scrupulous accounting but also for vouching as correct the entries in the accounts that the Treasury were sensitive about this possibility. In the event only one officer of suitable position seems to have fallen under serious suspicion of malpractice during the war, his case being rather more worthy of consideration than the petty affairs referred to above.

In March 1812 the Duke of York received an anonymous letter narrating certain scandalous transactions alleged against the Cadiz commissariat. Herries decided to investigate the accusations in secret, under cover of the existing project to send a senior officer of the accounts branch to Cadiz to establish an office. Accordingly on the 30th March D.C.G. Dickens in Portugal was ordered to proceed to Cadiz and investigate the charges, while D.C.G. O'Meara, head of the Cadiz department, was informed only of the ostensible reason for Dickens' impending arrival. Closer examination of the charges appears not to have justified so much trouble in their study and Dickens' two reports of May and June exposed them as having no basis

89. I omit from consideration here all question of the dishonesties of the muleteers which cannot be so lightly dismissed and receive consideration in chapter V.

90. Frauds within the department are being referred to here. Naturally many deceptions could be practised, by merchants for example on customs officials, quite independently of any commissariat connivance.

in fact. Previously though to the arrival of the second report, two further disquieting communications were received at the Treasury, signed this time, and containing new charges, one from a Spanish official named Morgado, in which O'Meara was accused of conspiring to defraud the Spanish customs by issuing falsified certificates of exemption⁹¹, the second from a certain Mr Thuillier by which the commissary was supposed to have behaved with profitable partiality in the allocation of army contracts.

Morgado's letter was sent to Dickens as an extension of his investigations while Thuillier's went to O'Meara himself for explanation, breaking the secrecy hitherto attached to the inquiry. In fact O'Meara knew already of Thuillier's accusations as their copyist had sought (unsuccessfully) to earn three hundred dollars by offering the commissary the damaging letters that were to be sent to England. O'Meara's defence was to send home all the papers he could relative to the army contracts, pointing out that at no time had he acted without the expressed approval of the garrison commander. Although Thuillier himself went to England to plead the case for his contracts as preferable to those O'Meara had accepted, he wasted his journey as O'Meara's explanations were felt adequate. Morgado's charge was harder to disprove. Dickens' two avenues of exploration were both closed to him under suspicious circumstances, first when the customs refused to show him any details of duty-free certificates issued⁹², and then when a page in a ledger belonging to Morgado's old employer, Mr Leford, and stated by Morgado to contain incontrovertible proof of his charges, was found by Dickens to have been torn out when the investigator, after several calls, eventually found Leford at home. O'Meara, though apprised of Morgado's letter by the time he answered Thuillier's charges, made no mention of Morgado, but he anticipated the next development when he characterised a friend of the Spaniard's, McDermot, as a man with a personal grudge against himself⁹³. In July McDermot sent to England a letter of accusations against the British commissariat which was returned

91. Goods imported for the use of the British garrison were exempted from customs duties.

92. This despite the fact that Morgado was a Spanish official. Dickens concluded from the customs' refusal that they were themselves guilty of frauds in respect of these certificates.

93. McDermot had been a baker in the employ of the commissariat, dismissed by O'Meara. He resented this and attempted to regain his place by threats against the commissary who ignored them. P.R.O. 57/41, O'Meara's letter and enclosures of 5th July 1812.

to Dickens for his consideration. Both Dickens and Herries by this time placed no credence in the charges but the process of exoneration worked slowly and it was not until the end of the year that O'Meara was "completely and honourably acquitted of all culpability in the alleged transactions" and his accusers stated "to have been activated by the basest motives of calumny and malevolence"⁹⁴.

It must be presumed that these conclusions were correct⁹⁵ and that the persistence of these accusations, even after the official pronouncement of O'Meara's blamelessness is only evidence of a faction at Cadiz disgruntled with the presence or behaviour of the British commissariat. Various motives can be discerned, McDermot's revenge for dismissal, Thuillier's the irritation of a thwarted businessman⁹⁶, while Morgado was possibly spurred by patriotic feelings⁹⁷. The indecisive result of Dickens' inquiry into his charges suggests that he may have had an inkling of real crimes, perhaps with Leford as the guilty party. His departure from Leford's employ and subsequent job in the customs service favour this view as had his dismissal been ignominious to himself it might have been expected that O'Meara or Dickens would have adduced this to the discredit of his assertions. One of the most striking features of the case is the way in which a single anonymous letter was sufficient to start a major investigation of an officer hitherto most highly regarded by his superiors and colleagues alike. This demonstrates clearly the attentiveness of the Treasury to the possibility of frauds. Granted this suspicious attitude it is tempting to suppose that any major swindles would not have passed without investigation and that the absence with the field army of any cases comparable to O'Meara's denotes the honesty of the commissariat officers. The amateurish nature of the investigation does not negate this argument which becomes less convincing however in the light of various significant circumstances.

94. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134. Herries to Cooke, 29th January 1813.

95. Cooke, the garrison's commanding officer, and Henry Wellesley, British ambassador to the Cortes, were also satisfied of O'Meara's innocence.

96. And, if O'Meara's account is true, of a thwarted smuggler. He claimed Thuillier falsified a duty-free certificate and when this was detected tried to bribe O'Meara to ignore the fact. Dickens reported that Thuillier had been a smuggler in England.

97. He would not be the only Spaniard to resent the British presence at Cadiz, nor the only Iberian to accuse the British officials of profiting at the expense of his nation's customs, with or without evidence.

One circumstance is the widespread contemporary conviction that commissaries benefited in illegitimate ways from their employment. Comments range from the generalised and guarded, like Larpent's "The Commissaries all live here exceedingly well, the Lord knows how out of their pay; and that ought to be nearly their only advantage"⁹⁸, to the specific, like Tomkinson's statement that the commissaries used public money to speculate in the orders to pay that had to be given the muleteers in lieu of money. Certainly a department order had been passed forbidding such speculation in the bills of army officers⁹⁹. Even the memoirs of the commissaries themselves provide occasional support for such suspicions. Schaumann's remark "if a commissary is expected to starve in the midst of all his stores, then the devil take the whole business"¹⁰⁰ is well known, but more interesting perhaps would be an account of where he got the £700 remitted to England on page 352. It would have taken every halfpenny of his pay for three years to amass the sum. Adding force to these considerations is the extreme ease with which officers of the department could profit by their duty. Leaving aside perquisites such as animals which could be 'requisitioned' unofficially (see again Schaumann page 151), the anarchical weights and measures system of Portugal left endless loopholes to anyone who received or issued provisions. The basic measures of grain (the Portuguese alquier or Spanish fanega) and alcohol (the pipe and its fraction the almude) were subject to immense regional variations¹⁰¹ with the result that a receipt quoted in local measure was a quite imprecise document in itself, leaving aside the unavoidable difficulties of accurate measurement under field conditions. Meat issues were even harder to check. How much issuable meat could be expected from a bullock? Nobody could tell precisely until the animal was slaughtered, and the issuing commissary had always the last

98. Such a remark might under certain conditions mean nothing at all, but Larpent was the Judge Advocate General and had no visible animosity towards the commissariat. Larpent vol I, letter of 14th April 1813.

99. P.R.O. W.O. 57/38, Order of the 5th September 1810.

100. A.L.F. Schaumann On the Road with Wellington, ed Ludovici, 1924, p 38.

101. The alquier was normally taken at its Lisbon value of about 14 lbs of barley but near Oporto might be 17 lbs or in the Azores 27 lbs. On the same list of receipts I have seen the fanega of barley quoted at 54, 60, 64 and 90 lbs. The 'normal' pipe seems to have been 114 $\frac{3}{4}$ gallons of wine though the pipe of Oporto was 95 and the Lisbon pipe was reckoned in the port of London to contain 140 gallons.

word¹⁰². It must have been very easy for an astute officer to accumulate a series of individually undetectable discrepancies, all in his own favour, which would have built up over a year or so to a substantial quantity. With the help of a local inhabitant too certifying the prevalence of prices slightly higher than were current, he could discreetly have made considerable sums.

Suspicion is not proof and it is not intended to suggest that all made profits on the side simply because all had the opportunity. As the war proceeded however the gradual tightening up of the regulations for receipting must have been designed to reduce opportunities for frauds which were suspected to exist. Gradually rules were introduced whereby receipts had to state English equivalents for all weights and measures and whether the sums of money involved were expressed in currency or metal¹⁰³. Little could be done however to improve the vouching system. There were circumstances of active service under which a perfectly honest transaction could not be adequately vouched and there were many ways of forging or falsifying so as to invest a swindle with seemingly impeccable supporting documents. The ease with which dishonest members of the medical department were able to circumvent similar regulations as to the vouching of expenditure should be remembered, though in that case the dishonesty began at the highest level which appears not to have been so in the commissariat¹⁰⁴. Though not even the most approximate figures survive in justification, it must be supposed that a small percentage of expenditure was regularly seeping away from its proper channels in a variety of little extravagances to the advantage of individual members of the department. The circumstances of the O'Meara case do suggest however the absence of corruption at very senior levels which alone might have given the situation the scandalous quality of the medical department defalcations, and it would be fanciful to state the 'shrinkage' of funds from fraud at a very high figure, to

102. The system of 'averaging' and pricing meat (see chapter III) made it impossible to check the issued weight against the supposed weight when alive, which would not in any case have been more than an approximate guide.

103. See chapter IV.

104. K.E. Crowe, 'Thomas Burn Catherwood and the Medical Department of Wellington's Army: 1809-14', Medical History, vol 20 No 1, January 1976.

assert that nest feathering often got in the way of duty or to set speculation in the balance against the vital work done by the commissariat in making the army's operations possible at all.

The principal hindrance to the efficient handling of commissariat business was lack of manpower and lack of a training scheme which would have enabled this shortage to be quickly overcome. All other inconveniences, a certain amount of personal friction, some waste from dishonesty, the decentralisation of command that resulted from the dual responsibility of the commissariat, and even the expenditure of time and effort over the accounts, are slight in comparison with this. The maligned promotion system on the other hand seems not to have deserved its share of criticism. About the competence of the individual officers a certain amount has been said, more instances are to follow, and a collected assessment of their quality will be presented in the final chapter along with some account of the relations between the department as a whole and the local population. It is now intended to consider separately the three main areas of commissariat responsibility, starting with the provision of rations.

CHAPTER III : The Provenance of Food and Forage Supplies to the Army
1809-14.

It is intended in this chapter to consider only the four most important commodities supplied by the commissariat to the army namely bread and meat, the basic necessities of life for the men, forage, equally vital to the horses, and alcohol which although not an essential supply like the others (indeed the issue was looked upon as an indulgence rather than as part of the soldier's entitlement) was almost invariably provided and so contributed to the demands on the military chest, and often the transport capacity, in the same way as the other ration items. The commissariat did at times provide other supplies besides these four, indeed firewood was probably a regular issue and rice at the rate of one pound per day among eight men was at times prescribed for the troops in General Orders, but the pressure of these and other subsidiary supplies upon the credit apparatus and the transport arrangements is felt to have been comparatively slight and the damage to army morale and discipline in the event of their failure, trivial. The problem of supply naturally grew with the increasing size of the army. In 1809 after Wellington's return to Portugal and before the Talavera campaign the British army totalled some 26,000 men with 4,000 horses. By the battle of Bussaco in September the following year these numbers had increased to 40,000 men and 6,000 horses. The addition of the Marquis de la Romana's Spanish army and certain Portuguese militia units raised the number of rations to be provided by the Commissary-General to 70,000 and 12,000 of forage while the army remained in the Torres Vedras lines, and the dispersal of this concentration of force in 1811 did not reduce the ration strength to the level of the previous year since on the 5th March Wellington adopted the principle that Portuguese units attached to British divisions should draw their supply from British stores. This left the commissariat with the task of feeding some 60,000 men in 1811. In late 1812 Kennedy reckoned the ration strength of the united army retiring on Portugal, once again at 70,000 and 12,000 forage rations, while in the Pyrenees he spoke of providing 100,000 rations to men and 20,000 to horses per day. Thus between 1809 and 1814 the quantity of provisions which the commissariat were expected to supply more than tripled, and it is against this background that the ways and means to be described in this chapter should be considered.

CHAPTER III, part A : Bread.

Bread, being a perishable commodity and easily damaged in transit, was neither stored in commissariat depots nor eaten far from the place of its baking. Troops stationed at depots, detachments passing through, the sick at hospital stations and the non-combatants of the commissariat and medical departments entitled to rations would receive bread freshly baked each day, sometimes from a small contractor or else baked by the good offices of the local magistrate, and similarly units of the field army in cantonments or in any position where there was a reasonable expectation of their remaining undisturbed for a while, would generally employ local labour to bake bread for their needs as far as the oven capacity of the locality would permit.¹ However the normal supply of the troops on the move and the reserve stock held in the depots from which the divisions drew their rations was of biscuit or of flour waiting to be baked. It was normally in the latter state that the commissariat received the bread rations when obtained from abroad or by purchase in the rear. Biscuit possessed the great virtue of lasting a long time provided it was baked hard enough. D.C.G. Boyes wrote of some baked under his direction at Tomar that, although not as good as biscuit baked in England, "it is far preferable to bread not only for carriage but for keeping as it will ... keep a month or two & is in my opinion very good"². The secret, as D.C.G. Routh pointed out to a subordinate, was to bake it hard right through without leaving a soft part in the middle which would be liable to moulder³. It was also lighter in transit than bread since the ration was less, only one pound rather than a pound and a half, and was altogether a much more satisfactory commodity from the commissary's point of view. Not surprisingly though the superior gastronomic qualities of bread made it the more popular

1. As early as the 17th June 1809 a General Order issued at Abrantes instructed all brigade commissaries whenever halting anywhere for more than one night to examine the baking capacity of the locality and expand it if required for the number of troops in their charge. As the arrangements for supply from the depots became more efficient with the accumulation of provision reserves and the growth of an effective transport this order in all its stringency became superfluous but baking, or otherwise obtaining locally, at least a part of the unit's consumption when in fixed positions remained usual to the end of the war.

2. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17983, Boyes to Ogilvie, 30th September 1810.

3. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 21, Routh to Marsden, 10th January 1812.

issue on the part of the army, and for convenience hereafter I shall describe the obtaining by the commissariat of bread, biscuit, flour or wheat as the bread supply.

The bread supply is best considered in three periods, not precisely defined in time but running roughly, the first from April 1809 (the start of this study) to the end of 1810, the second from then until the lifting of the British ban on grain exports, announced to Commissary-General Kennedy on the 18th June 1813, and the third from that date to the end of the war.

The first period was marked by the absence of any large scale importing arrangements, whether from the United Kingdom or other foreign sources. During 1810 slightly over one million pounds of flour was sent from England to the Peninsula, mostly comprehended in a single shipment which arrived in August, and at the end of the year the Treasury ordered the despatch of ten thousand quarters of wheat⁴. It is very likely that some biscuit was received from England in the latter part of 1809 but the quantity cannot have been great as the total value of supplies sent from the United Kingdom to Spain and Portugal in that year was only 20% of the 1810 figure and some of this money is accounted for by the rum and salt meat sent as well⁵. These amounts are small compared with the army's requirements over the twenty one month period (somewhere in excess of twenty million rations) and perhaps might amount to 25 or 30% of consumption. Smaller seem to be the quantities acquired from other sources overseas as far as they may be ascertained. At the recommendation of the Treasury Commissary-General Murray bought a consignment of grain including one million pounds of wheat from a certain Mr. Phillips in January 1810⁶, and this was probably the most substantial import transaction of the period. A small amount of wheat was sent from the Azores on the 9th June 1810 (about 100,000 lbs)⁷ and flour was sent to the Tagus from Cadiz both directly by the commissariat

4. A bushel of wheat is reckoned to weigh roughly 60 lbs, thus the ten thousand quarters would have weighed 4,800,000 lbs.

5. The reason for inferring this shipment is that the stock of biscuit in the 1st January 1810 return of depot stores is described as "English biscuit". P.R.O. W.O. 57/38. Further Boyes, in the letter quoted above, compares his product with the one baked in England implying the presence in Portugal of the object of his comparison.

6. Further details of the above transaction may be found in the section dealing with forage and forage corn.

7. P.R.O. A.O.1 569/460.

and by a contractor at the end of the same year. More uncertain is the quantity obtained from the Barbary coast. In November 1810 Commissary-General Drummond observed that there was wheat awaiting collection "under treaty" at Bona since August but that only now were steps being taken, by the ubiquitous Sr Sampaio and Mr Cochrane Johnstone in a joint venture, to bring it to Lisbon⁸. The treaty referred to was presumably the trade agreement of the 9th September 1809 with Algiers, but it remains pure speculation to guess how much ultimately arrived at Lisbon, if indeed any did at all.

It is clear that no certain figure can be obtained representing the number of bread rations consumed between April 1809 and the end of 1810 for which the army was indebted to imports. It is also clear that the amount was far from overwhelming and might reasonably be hypothesised to fall somewhere between a third and a half of all consumption. This estimate is not denied by the recorded opinions of the two Commissaries-General. Murray acknowledged four modes of supply to the army during his appointment, namely contract, purchase, requisition and imports from home, and reckoned purchase to have been his main resource⁹, while Kennedy felt that at least until July 1810 a third of all consumption had been provided by the brigade commissaries themselves. In the light of these statements we may look to the experience of the army at brigade level for confirmation of the great deficiency of imported provisions and for information about how the lack was made good.

That, as Murray implies, requisitions and local purchases played a substantial part in the bread supply during 1809 is confirmed by two letters, one from Mr Myler regarding the arrangements made for supplying the four squadrons of cavalry stationed at Vila Vicosa, who were to draw one thousand and twenty rations of bread per day from several villages in the vicinity¹⁰, and one from A.C.G. Gauntlett (supervising the supply of the 1st division) informing General Sherbrooke that some villages had not provided their quota of bread and going on to report the failure of the Junta of Badajoz to

8. Now Annaba in Algeria. B.M. Add Mss 57375, Drummond to Herries, 24th November 1810.

9. 18th Report of the Commissioners v.s. Presumably Murray lumps together as purchases import transactions such as that with Mr Phillips and local operations such as Mr Downie's trip into the mountains for cattle.

10. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17907 f.60, Myler to Ogilvie, 2nd September 1809.

provide eight thousand rations he had been expecting¹¹. Nor was it only in the forward positions that the troops lived off the locality since in June, Mr Schaumann had excused his tardy transport return by pleading the extreme difficulty of obtaining bread and corn at Tomar, no great distance from the main supply route from Lisbon to Abrantes¹². Certainly some wheat and very likely flour and biscuit too did arrive at the army from the rear in the course of the year, but it is evident that the practice was to conserve such stocks for use on the march and when stationary to subsist for quite long periods on local means¹³. Myler's arrangement alluded to above was to last a month at some of the villages in question and not less than three weeks anywhere.

After the division of the army at the turn of the year this system remained in force with all outlying units, but not perhaps quite to the same extent as in 1809. The light division, between the Agueda and Coa rivers found the district unable (notwithstanding even the draconian measures of Mr Downie during May¹⁴) to supply all their needs. Until the 26th March the 43rd regiment was able to live on a combination of supplies from the depot at Pinhel and from the inhabitants of Malpartida but thereafter the latter supply failed, while the 52nd, save the three companies in Callegos, were already largely depending on bread from the rear. However the depots on which these troops depended, Almeida and Pinhel for the most part, themselves were stocked with a mixture of supplies brought forward along the depot chain and local purchases, so the emancipation of Craufurd's command from the resources of the vicinity was less than at first sight appears¹⁵. In the southern theatre as well the troops received a combination of depot supplies and local acquisitions, the former being held as a reserve

11. Supplementary Despatches VI, Gauntlett to Sherbrooke, 15th September 1809.

12. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 22080 f.39. Schaumann to Ogilvie, 22nd June 1809. Schaumann was commissary to the 14th light dragoons at the time.

13. The 3rd division too was following this practice in October. See N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17907. Finlay to Ogilvie, 20th October 1809.

14. Despatches VI. Wellington to Craufurd, 14th May 1810. Wellington even gave Craufurd permission to draw on the Almeida reserve rather than oppress the locals although Mr Cooper had received a reprimand in March for issuing reserve biscuit.

15. During the week 24th to 30th March 1810 Almeida received 40 sacks of biscuit and 52 barrels of flour or wheat from the commissariat, and 59 sacks of flour or wheat with 718 loaves from local magistrates or private individuals. In the same period 14 pipes of wine arrived from Pinhel and 10 from the locality. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17953.

stock "agreeable to the order on the 24th of February"¹⁶ as D.A.C.G. Wechinger observed, upon his reporting six days' biscuit in the possession of Stewart's brigade. All the same the troops in his charge were being supplied with bread by the corregidor at Portalegre in July, as the men of Wilson's brigade had been the previous month. Not surprisingly, further from the base depot at Abrantes local bread was also much in demand though sometimes short in supply. From Castello Branco Mr Belson had to send as far away as Fundao and Covilhao for bread, though a month later he had found the means to draw one thousand nine hundred rations per day from the immediate neighbourhood¹⁷.

Just as in the north the forward depots themselves were the recipients of some local supplies which they passed on to the units, so the depot at Portalegre was indebted to various natives of the country, officials, like the corregidor and provisor of Portalegre, and private individuals for an assortment of supplies including substantial quantities of wheat and bread¹⁸. Two private contractors, Messrs Dillon and Fletcher also served the southern army, providing supplies of bread, meat and barley. Mr Fletcher was based at Elvas where he offered the wheat and flour he obtained both to the British commissariat and to the Portuguese 'assentista', but appears to have given the British the first refusal, presumably because their credit was better. The Portalegre depot certainly received supplies from Fletcher at Elvas during June and very likely on other occasions, but, more than this, by July the merchant was acting in an intermediary role, almost as if he had been himself a commissary. His letter of the 13th of July shows him loading and despatching mules and making advance preparations for the reception of troops, both jobs normally the duty of commissariat employees. D.C.G. Ogilvie had asked him to "send all the brigade mules to Portalegre with Wheat, Flour and Barley: your request shall be attended to. I arrived this morn'g at six o'clock from Campo Maior; where I had arranged everything for the reception of the troops, by employing the same agents as I had at

16. Ibid No 17972, Wechinger to Ogilvie, 14th June 1810.

17. His early difficulties may have been as a result of his reluctance to issue rye bread. All accounts agree that the only flour available near Castello Branco was rye and there were several grumbles about its indifferent quality though Messrs Belson, Wilkinson and Berard all had to issue it in August and September 1810 for lack of anything better.

18. For example in April and May 25,000 lbs of wheat from Sr Francisco Xavier Borges Perreira Ferrais and 70,000 lbs of bread from Sr Joao Martin Sergio d'Almeida. Ibid No 22079 ff 88 and 105/6.

the time General Hope was here¹⁹, and think nothing would have been wanting, but I am afraid the bread will now be lost which was baked last night"²⁰. This establishes the fact that Fletcher was a source of bread for the southern troops, not only as an occasional supplier to the Portalegre depot but also as an arranger of local supplies directly to detachments, reinforcing the conclusion that the British forces made considerable use of local resources in this period of the war.

These various evidences support the statements of Kennedy and Murray about the sketchiness of the supply moving forward along the depot chain in 1810 and also bear out the estimate given earlier of the relative paucity of flour and wheat imports in this first period as it is clear that a great deal of the bread consumed was obtained locally, without any accumulation of stocks in the rear resulting from this independent consumption. In the provision state of the 1st January there are shown about three million pounds of biscuit, flour and wheat while on the 30th November the same figure is less than one million pounds²¹. Thus the chief reason why so much bread was locally consumed in 1809/10 must be that so little was fed into the depots in rear.

In the second period, from the end of 1810 to June 1813, great exertions were extended, mainly under the auspices of Charles Stuart and Wellington, to increase the import supply. The two main areas for these efforts were the Mediterranean and the United States, for no supply of wheat appears to have arrived from Britain in this period, although it was not until the 21st November 1811 that Lord Liverpool communicated to Wellington the government's decision that in view of the bad harvest no more grain was to be exported from the British Isles. This policy remained in force for eighteen months in spite of a particular request from Bisset in March 1812 that a supply of

19. In 1808, during Sir John Moore's advance into Spain.

20. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17974, Fletcher to Ogilvie, 13th July 1810.

21. The exact breakdown is:

	<u>Biscuit</u>	<u>Flour</u>	<u>Wheat</u> (all lbs)
1st Jan 1810 :	1,692,160	1,099,160	87,070
30th Nov 1810 :	-	398,500	548,080

flour be sent²², and despite the tempting offer of a Mr John Lawrence Drake to supply twenty thousand quarters of wheat (foreign) to the Peninsula. Both request and offer were turned down²³. The Treasury and the Commissary in Chief were not however totally insensitive to the needs of the Peninsula, and Herries entered into an arrangement with Messrs Oswell & Co to bring grain from the Black Sea. This project was announced to Bisset on the 30th May 1812 with the warning rider that "It is however by no means certain that the gentlemen will find themselves able to surmount all the political difficulties which lie in the way of the performance of this engagement"²⁴. By October the political difficulties had indeed proved insurmountable and Herries was asking Burgman, the Commissary-General in Sicily, to assist Kennedy as much as possible in obtaining Mediterranean grain for Spain and Portugal. The Treasury was still refusing to export "even for the army except under circumstances of absolute necessity"²⁵.

The Mediterranean had been a source of supply for Portugal before the Commissary in Chief thus enlisted Burgman's assistance in the buying. It was normal for the country in peace time to make up for its insufficient domestic wheat production by importing from the North African coast, although political difficulties with the Barbary States threw frequent interruptions in the way of this trade. The same pattern persisted in the war years, wheat being exported from Morocco and Algiers (possibly under the trading agreement, see above) despite the fact that the Algerines were at war with Portugal until the agreement of an uneasy armistice in June 1812²⁶. Prior to this, the Portuguese agent, Mr Dalzell, with the support of the British consul, Blanckley, had been arranging grain exports from Algiers to Lisbon but after Blanckley was dismissed in the spring of 1812 the proconsul,

22. Ibid 58/132, Herries to Bisset, 2nd March 1812. Bisset had asked for 2,500,000 lbs of flour a month. Herries did not refuse out of hand but submitted the question to the Treasury who vetoed the scheme.

23. The offer was made on the 15th July 1812 and rejected two months later. The price of £5 per quarter was cheap by current English standards but perhaps the Treasury felt it excessive in the Peninsula. July was a month of low grain prices in the Mediterranean and wheat could have been bought for £4 10/- a quarter. By September this was no longer so but presumably the information took a while to reach London. Ibid 57/5, Harrison to Herries 15th July 1812.

24. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132. Herries to Bisset, 30th May 1812.

25. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134. Herries to Kennedy, 15th October 1812.

26. B.M. Add Mss 41512. McDonnell to Stuart, 2nd April and 10th April 1813.

John McDonnell, began to urge Dalzell's recall and declared that no part of the export from Algiers should pass Gibraltar, so presumably the Algerine supply at Lisbon was then stopped. The following year an agreement was reached with the Bay of Oran for exporting duty free articles, among them one thousand loads of wheat. This was perhaps a timely circumstance as the Moroccans had at this time decided that corn was not to be exported any more. Evidently this trade was not very dependable, and it was certainly very small in scale compared to the American shipments²⁷. Clearly the commissariat, although taking great trouble in this period to procure supplies of grain, appear to have made no effort to increase or regularise the supply from north Africa, thus relegating it to a relatively minor role.

Other Mediterranean sources may be briefly dealt with. Charles Stuart employed Sampaio early in 1812 to buy flour and grain at Gibraltar and Cadiz and eleven shiploads were duly forthcoming at Lisbon²⁸. The Cadiz garrison, plentifully stocked as usual, sent ten thousand barrels of flour to Lisbon in January the same year²⁹. Favourable prognostications about the harvest of 1812 in the Mediterranean regions led to an increase in trading activity in the late summer and autumn of the year and wheat prices at Malta and Sicily rose sharply, "which must be the case if Spanish vessels resort to Malta for supplies"³⁰ as one of Herries' Mediterranean correspondents observed. As the Treasury were sensitive to the price of articles they soon grew alarmed and modified their implied instructions of October 1812, when Commissary-General Burgman had been asked to render assistance to his Peninsular colleague, ordering that trade should be allowed to take its natural course, and that Levantine wheat should not be bought for Portugal in the central Mediterranean³¹. By the time this direction was issued

27. G.E. Watson, in his article already cited, is of the opinion that the response from north Africa was 'disappointing' viewed as a source of supply alternative to that from America in 1812. In 1811 46 Turkish or Moorish vessels had entered the port of Lisbon compared to 797 Americans. Admittedly some of the latter did not come directly from the United States and some of the Barbary trade may have gone in Portuguese or Spanish bottoms, but the Mediterranean vessels were smaller than their ocean going counterparts so the predominant volume of American trade seems clearly established.

28. P.R.O. A.O.1 570/467.

29. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, O'Meara to Herries, 1st February 1812.

30. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134. Enclosed in Herries to Kennedy, 3rd November 1812.

31. Ibid, 57/5, Harrison to Herries, 4th March 1813.

however it was evident that the need for vigorous action had passed, both from the healthy state of supplies at Lisbon³² and from the successful conclusion, in February 1813, of Sampaio's negotiations for a large purchase (eighteen million pounds) of wheat in Egypt. The altered situation of the war both in Spain and northern Europe by the time this purchase began its journey through the Mediterranean rendered the eventual disposal of the consignment something of an embarrassment but this could not possibly have been foreseen at the start of the year³³.

Official initiatives to obtain grain from the Americas were prominent in 1811 and 1812. Indeed before the close of 1810 Stuart gave Sampaio bills to the value of £400,000 to be used in America for the purchase of supplies. This money was laid out to acquire forty six cargoes of flour, rice, Indian corn and navy bread (biscuit) which made their way back to the Peninsula early in 1811³⁴. The following year Stuart was again the author of a large purchase in America through the agency of Sampaio, although this time payment was made by Augustus Foster, British minister at Washington, with bills sent him from Lisbon for the purpose. Seventy one ships sailed on this occasion with cargoes of flour and grain, their passage being delayed by the April trade embargo imposed by the American government, but all arrived safely later in the year. The quantities involved in these shipments are evidently substantial and when to them are added the proceeds of two separate purchases of flour and grain in South America negotiated by Lord Strangford, British ambassador to the exiled Portuguese court, again at Stuart's instigation, there is accounted for nearly a half of the British commissariat's issues in 1811 and 1812³⁵. Nor is it necessary to look very far to discover the source of as much more as was required as it was

32. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 18th January 1813. "I have to express my satisfaction at finding your supplies of flour and forage corn are so ample and that you have no reason to fear a scarcity of those articles in the markets".

33. Ibid 57/6, Harrison to Herries, 3rd August and 20th October 1813, Wharton to Herries, 30th August 1813.

34. P.R.O. A.O.1 570/465. These are probably the vessels for which the Marquis Wellesley granted a protected passage in February 1811.

35. Also contributing to this figure is wheat from the Azores and flour from Canada, the former a small quantity (about 80,000 lbs), the latter more substantial (3,820 barrels) bought at Bisset's request by Commissary-General Robinson at Quebec and shipped in October 1812. P.R.O. W.O. 57/40, Pipon to Herries, 13th October 1812 and Ibid 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 6th November 1812.

common knowledge in the Peninsula that a great proportion of the flour eaten by the armies was brought from America by American merchants³⁶. By the end of 1811 Wellington and Stuart had begun to worry about the drain of specie in paying for these large flour imports and the following year it became necessary to restrict the issue of licences to export silver³⁷. Even under the restriction the trade remained considerable, as between mid-July and the end of September 1812 licences were obtained for the export of 322,500 dollars to America although this was a drop by comparison with the figure for the preceding two and a half month period which had been over 700,000 dollars. This flourishing trade continued under British licence regardless of the outbreak of war in April 1812 and only came to a stop in summer 1813 as a result of two measures, the British decision of November 14th 1812 to issue no new licences (though to honour all those extant - nine months was a typical limit on their validity) and the American Act of the 29th July 1813 forbidding all trade under British licences.

A glance at the statistics for the war years makes the huge increase in American flour imports into Portugal after the year 1810 very apparent³⁸. Far more flour was sold in 1811, 1812 and 1813 than the allied armies could possibly have eaten, so it is clear that the only limitation which might have prevented the British commissariat obtaining an ample supply of bread both for the troops that were their responsibility and to contribute in kind towards the Portuguese subsidy, was lack of money or credit to pay for the provisions. Money was in short supply, especially during 1812, but British credit remained adequate and it would seem that, despite the Non-Importation Act of February 1811, some of the American merchants were

36. See for example "Mr Pipon's drafts are generally for supplies of provisions purchased from the Americans", Despatches IX p.364, Wellington to Bathurst, 18th August 1812. "All the flour used comes from America, the ships of which country crowd the port", Letters of Colonel Augustus Frazer ed. Sabine 1859 p. 20. And many other references.

37. B.M. Add Mss 31236 Stuart to Castlereagh, 24th September 1812.

38. W.F. Galpin 'The American Grain Trade to the Spanish Peninsula', American Historical Review October 1922, gives these figures:

1808	41,761 barrels flour.	1812	557,218 barrels flour.
1809	65,149 "	1813	542,399 "
1810	88,696 "	1814	4,141 "
1811	529,105 "		

The quantities in the pre-war years vary widely: for example 22,633 barrels back in 1805 and 122,410 in 1803.

still prepared to accept payment in bills on London³⁹, though many must have received cash from individuals better endowed with that asset than were the commissariat the British subsequently buying the flour with bills at second hand and an accordingly higher price. The value of drafts upon London made at Lisbon in 1811 and 1812 can only be explained by supposing substantial purchases in the Lisbon market. It is thus apparent that in this period, in contrast to the previous one, the commissariat was enabled to procure bread stocks from abroad adequate to the supply of the field army and the maintenance of a reserve in the magazines.

Turning from the story of these imports to the experience of the army in the field, the comparative plenty of flour at the coast leads one to expect an increase in this period in the consumption of depot supplied bread and biscuit and a corresponding lesser use of the local article. The evidence for 1811 suggests that this was not in fact the case and that the import increase went mainly to swelling the reserve depots, exiguous as we have seen at the end of 1810, and very little to feeding the army⁴⁰. Even while the divisions were in front of Santarem and the communication with Lisbon was short the forces on the left bank were considerably supplied from the country and since the depot at Vallada from which they drew a proportion of their biscuit also supplied the men forward on the Rio Maior its shortages will have been felt by the main army too. Particularly in December 1810 Vallada often ran short of biscuit. Messrs Wilkinson and Belson supplying units on the left bank must have drawn about half their bread from local sources at this time. It is likely that the left bank men, having better access to undevastated areas, were last served at the depots⁴¹, the main army thus receiving more depot biscuit than these brigades, but by no means all the provisions obtained on the left bank remained with the men on that side.

39. Watson op.cit. suggests that the Non-Importation Act put an end to the acceptance of bills on London by American merchants. On the other hand Galpin cites the case of a shipper instructed to accept such payment in March 1811 as being the normal practice. From Wellington's and Stuart's complaints about the specie drain it is evident that bills cannot have been popular but equally obvious that they were used on occasions.

40. Paying the Portuguese subsidy in kind was another use to which sea-borne supplies were commonly put.

41. Wilkinson hints as much when he writes "On every side I see numberless mules and cars passing downwards with Grain for the troops on the other side". N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17980 Wilkinson to Ogilvie, 8th December 1810.

Besides this transfer of essentially local provisions the units of the main army also undertook foraging expeditions (sweeping the country towards the enemy as Schaumann explained) so the magazine supply to the troops on the Rio Maior was far from complete⁴².

When the army returned to the Spanish border for the rest of the year 1811 the consumption of supplies imported or purchased at the coastal markets was calculated by Bisset as part of a general break-down of expenditure. His finding was that "that proportion of the supplies which is purchased with the different divisions and regiments beyond which they are enabled to draw from the depots, also those purchased at stations in the interior, exclusive of Lisbon and Oporto"⁴³, was over two thirds of total expenditure on supplies. This proportion would not have been equal for all commodities as local expenditure would have included much of the meat supply and probably all the alcohol so perhaps the proportion in the case of bread might have been somewhere around 50%. It is however clear that this high proportion of local purchases did not result from a shortage in rear. Kennedy went so far as to sell wheat to the Victualling Board's resident agent at Lisbon in the autumn⁴⁴, which he would hardly have done had he been in difficulties over the supply, and Bisset's January 1812 return of provisions, though not itself extant, was found so reassuring by Herries as to lead him to congratulate the Commissary-General on his steps to ameliorate the effects of the poor British harvest⁴⁵.

By 1812 it would appear that the flour and biscuit accumulated on the coast was beginning to make its appearance with the field army in increasingly substantial quantities and that during this year and the first half of 1813 the bread supply came mostly from the rear although never to the complete exclusion of supplies from other sources. It is suggested by the manner of Bisset's department orders that the change in emphasis from local to depot

42. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17980 f. 53. Mr Lefevre was at Bemfica at the end of 1810 buying 'Wheat, forage corn and cattle'. Wilkinson complained about him too; "I am informed that a person now stationed at Bemfica has authority from the Commissariat to employ a number of agents in this part of the country who are sweeping it (if I may use the expression) of wine and grain of every kind".

43. B.M. Add Mss 38247 f.29 Bisset to Herries, 16th January 1812. The calculations are based on an average of the previous six months' figures and so pertain to the second half of 1811.

44. P.R.O. W.O. 57/4, Arbuthnot to Herries, 15th January 1812.

45. Ibid 58/132, Herries to Bisset, 2nd March 1812.

supplies was at least partly achieved by changing the habits of the field commissaries who had acquired expertise from experience of fending for themselves and were unaccustomed to drawing more than a partial supply from magazines. After urging his subordinates to use the depots as much as possible Bisset proceeded: "I know that many Commissaries purchase Bread because some General Officers do not wish biscuit at all times to be issued. I will not however suffer this to be a plea and will lay the matter before the Commander of the Forces if it is made one. Besides Flour can be brought up from our Depots and baked with but little trouble or expence"⁴⁶. That the biscuit and flour really was available in the depots as Bisset claimed is confirmed by the experience of Ashworth's brigade stationed at Castello da Vide where they were instructed in February to build a ten day reserve of biscuit: "You may be always supplied with bread from this depot (Portalegre)... or you may draw flour from hence or from Niza"⁴⁷. These orders were obeyed as appears by the fact that the brigade in the three months between the 25th January and the 24th April 1812 obtained only 8% of its bread from local sources, the rest from the depots⁴⁸.

For most of the remainder of the year the army was in Spain but remained considerably dependent on its supply lines for biscuit. The depots at Barca d'Alva, Ciudad Rodrigo and Salamanca all supplied direct to the divisions in the north at different times and it may well have been the Commissary-General's original intention to maintain the bread supply even at a great distance from the depots solely from the rear. This appears to be the object of the policy, adopted by Bisset in the summer, of feeding the horses in the country and re-allocating the cavalry mules to carriage of bread and spirits⁴⁹ but, as one might expect, even with such an increased transport capacity the bread supply from the rear was still precarious in the heart of Spain. D.C.G. Dumaresq had a man at Carbonero, near Madrid, in August buying bread for the 4th division, and the papers relating to the 6th division in July and August make it plain that they must have had their own

46. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 55 Order issued at Niza, 16th April 1812.

47. Ibid No 37, Routh to Marsden, 7th February 1812.

48. Ibid C No 72.

49. This idea was explained by Bisset to the Commissary in Chief as already in execution on the 5th July 1812 (P.R.O. W.O. 57/41). According to J E Daniel, Journal of an Officer in the Commissariat Department of the Army, 1820, the cavalry regiments still had their mules at the beginning of June so presumably the change-over took place in that month.

arrangements for a part of their bread⁵⁰. The measure did at least have the good effect of transferring some of the strain of making up shortfalls in the supply from the already overworked field commissaries to those in command of intermediate depots. Two extra sources augmented the flow of biscuit from the rear to the army in 1812, contracts with individuals and issues of provisions from the revenue (in kind) of the Spanish Crown's recaptured lands in the Salamanca region. This latter source, described by Wellington as the only way to obtain provisions from Spain "without payment, either immediately on delivery or in a short period"⁵¹, appears to have turned out less considerable than was hoped, but was nonetheless of benefit to the depot at Salamanca where, independently of the supplies that were held for issue to the mule brigades, the hospital, garrison and detachments combined in consuming eight thousand rations a day⁵².

Contracts with individuals were the larger means of extra supply beyond what was brought forward from the rear. Bisset appears to have made a substantial bread contract at Valladolid from which he had hoped the mules of the army might be supplied directly but by the 8th August this had already failed and he had to alert the divisional commissaries that their transport would need to go further to the rear. At Salamanca several contracts were extant at the same time, the largest being with Sr Antonio da Pessoa who bought the articles of his supply on the Portuguese border. This agreement, made towards the end of August by Commissary-General Dalrymple, the terms including a supply of one hundred thousand pounds of biscuit at five thousand pounds a day, was sufficiently successful to be worth renewing for a further hundred thousand pounds on the 25th September, although what he provided seems to have been bread and not biscuit at all⁵³.

50. See chapter VI.

51. B.M. Add Mss 31236 Marginal notes to Vansittart's memorandum of 2nd September 1812.

52. Dalrymple and Ogilvie made proposals to obtain 120 and 200 fanegas respectively of wheat per day from the Intendente of Salamanca who had the duty of administering the crown lands. According to the note in the Ogilvie papers however only 1,500 fanegas were received between 24th August and 15th October 1812 which makes 28 a day. Perhaps the revenue was divided as Wellington had originally ordered it to be given to the (Spanish) garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo and only at Dalrymple's request agreed that the commissariat should have first claim on it or perhaps the change of Intendente was entirely to blame. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17981 f.104 and Despatches IX p 483, Wellington to Beresford, 14th October 1812.

53. Mr Cairns asserted that Pessoa used two ovens to bake 3,200 rations of bread daily (4,800 lbs). To bake only 3,200 rations of biscuit would have been to perform much less than his contract. Further Cairns complained that yesterday's bread was "of a very bad quality & nearly half rye", probable enough if Pessoa did indeed purchase on the Portuguese border but not likely to have been biscuit. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17981 Cairns to Ogilvie 15th September 1812.

Concurrently with this contract ran another with two bakers called Pedras who were made responsible for producing bread from the wheat supplied by the Intendente at Salamanca and Fuente Sauco and for its delivery to the troops. Yet a third contract for supplying bread, to the hospital this time, was held by Don Marizo Gebara in October. There seems to have been no shortage of suppliers⁵⁴ - indeed more than these were turned away for their excessive prices - and it would seem safe to suppose that such shortfalls as did occur in the supply from the rear were made up readily from contracts rather than by requisitions on individuals or magistrates⁵⁵.

The defeat of Napoleon in Russia and subsequent shaking of his control over the Baltic coast and its large fertile hinterland caused the abandonment of the Treasury's non-exporting policy. On the 8th June 1813, Herries announced to Kennedy the purchase of nineteen hundred quarters of wheat arrived "under peculiar circumstances" from the Baltic, and its impending despatch to Portugal⁵⁶. Ten days later he wrote more fully explaining the new policy of supplying the Peninsula with large monthly quantities from the United Kingdom, "it being deemed a measure of considerable public economy ... that these supplies should be conveyed to you as much as possible from this country and by British shipping only"⁵⁷. Thereafter the commissariat was to become as dependent for its bread supply on England as it had been in the previous two and a half years upon America.

The quantity which Herries reckoned sufficient to support the army for the month of July was, besides the wheat already mentioned, one million one hundred thousand pounds of flour⁵⁸. Unless he heard to the contrary he proposed to send a very similar quantity every subsequent month⁵⁹. In

54. For example Sr Luis de Sobral whose 30,000 lbs of flour at 140 reis per pound were felt by Dalrymple to be too expensive: "it bears no proportion to the price of wheat, bread or biscuit, the latter of which although exceeding dear at 3 reals is much cheaper than flour at 140 reas". N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17947, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 4th September 1812.

55. Requisition was of course resorted to in 1812 but as far as I know to a negligible extent.

56. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 8th June 1813.

57. Ibid, 18th June.

58. This was not a firm estimate on his part. In the same letter he asks Kennedy to tell him what quantities were necessary to maintain the six month reserve Wellington had ordered in 1811, and support the troops.

59. Precisely 2,000 quarters of wheat and 1,120,000 lbs of flour.

the first month indeed more was shipped than was promised because to the flour was added half a million pounds of biscuit⁶⁰. This enlarged amount would have been nearly adequate to provisioning eighty thousand men for a month and, when added to the fact that flour and biscuit was also shipped round from the Lisbon reserve stocks to the north Spanish ports⁶¹, it appears that the army was sufficiently supplied with bread from the sea. That this was not so is because so much of the supply was in the form of flour and the bakeries of Santander produced a mere six thousand pounds of biscuit a day⁶². By the 14th August the advanced coastal depot of Passages held as much flour as could be stored there and Kennedy ordered that no more flour unbaked should be sent on from Santander. "In the present situation of the army no bread can be got from the country and we therefore depend upon our Victuallers"⁶³ wrote Kennedy, adding that only nine days' biscuit and flour were held in the ports of Bilbao and Passages. At Santander there was a further two and a half days' biscuit and six hundred and fifty thousand pounds of flour that could not be baked.

The obvious solution was to have the biscuit sent ready baked from England. Ogilvie had already suggested this in a letter to the Commissary in Chief on the 17th July, but it was not until Kennedy insisted on the 18th of the following month that wheat or flour, especially in large cumbersome casks, was of little use thanks to the poor baking facilities, that the suggestion appears to have been acted upon. Biscuit already baked was the usual supply in the autumn, as far as can be judged in sufficient quantities for the consumption of the army at least until the

60. The first shipment took place on 3rd July 1813. During July there were shipped 1,192,576 lbs of flour and 505,760 lbs of biscuit, besides the 1,900 quarters of wheat.

61. Ogilvie optimistically asserted that the surplus stocks from the depots in Portugal "have already wholly or in part reached this port" (Santander) on 17th July, but in mid-August he and Kennedy were complaining of shortages and on the 23rd August we learn that a Lisbon convoy was still held up at Corunna, a month after putting out. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17936, Ogilvie to Herries, 17th July 1813.

62. P.R.O. W.O. 57/42 Ogilvie to Herries, 23rd August 1813. One of the hindrances to baking at Santander was the arrest of several bakers by the Spanish authorities "on account of being natives of France". It was the first of many obstructive actions by the Spaniards of Santander who seem to have resented the English presence. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17955, Ogilvie to Kennedy, 19th August 1813.

63. Ibid No 16930, Kennedy to Ogilvie, 19th August 1813.

end of October⁶⁴. In late November Kennedy did write alarmingly to London that his depots were running low again but his fear was mainly about forage corn and he mentioned biscuit only to stress his complete dependence upon a regular supply⁶⁵. Clearly this was still forthcoming in the new year; by early April Dalrymple was in a position to refuse offers of biscuit supply from France, stating, "We have already abundance on the coast"⁶⁶.

Turning to the experience of the men in the field during the closing stages of the war, this picture of large scale importing is mirrored in the fact that bread was usually supplied entirely from the rear, particularly once the army settled into regular cantonments in and around the Pyrenees. Before the supply ships started to arrive in July there were many local purchases, including "a large quantity of rice and flour" bought by Ogilvie at Santander⁶⁷, but generally by commissaries in the field. "I must inform you that the Commissaries of division always procure a certain quantity of soft bread and wine in the country" wrote Ogilvie in July⁶⁸. Procuring this bread however was not always easy. A.C.G. Tupper Carey, of the 4th division, drew all his bread between September and January from depots, while D.A.C.G. Head with the 3rd division issued half rations at the end of December and was "wholly dependant on what I can get from Ustaritz (the reserve depot of the centre) to keep up even half rations of biscuit"⁶⁹. The 6th division, short of transport in December, found it most convenient to employ all its mules in the carriage of biscuit and obtain the other articles of consumption by purchase or contract. The embarrassed condition of the 3rd division was, it is true, spared by

64. P.R.O. W.O. 62/18. It is impossible to say for certain about quantities given in barrels as barrels of two standard sizes were in common use by the Victualling Board and other weights occur occasionally. Assuming that the 17,072 barrels despatched between 11th September and 27th October 1813 were equally of the two common sizes the resulting quantity was sufficient supply over 47 days for 104,248 men.

65. On the 21st November there were 1,500,000 lbs of biscuit at Santander, Passages and at sea; a reasonable reserve but little enough to require constant replenishment. P.R.O. W.O. 57/43 Kennedy to Herries, 21st November 1813.

66. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17959. Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 3rd April 1814.

67. This 'large quantity' seems to have cost him about £1,500. Converting at the army par of 4/6d per dollar, this would have bought roughly 20,000 lbs of each article.

68. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17936. Ogilvie to Herries, 17th July 1813.

69. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16929. Head to Ogilvie, 2nd January 1814.

obtaining a supply of two thousand pounds of bread daily from the locality but this was an exceptional event, occasioned by a special arrangement made with the Maire of Hasparren by Dalrymple who "paid a very considerable sum of money to enable him (the Maire) to procure supplies from the interior of the country"⁷⁰. Most units could find, until the Pyrenees were left behind in February, only enough bread to supply the staff, if indeed any was to be had at all.

This shortage attracted a host of merchants and would-be contractors who bought supplies far away in Spain and brought them to the front, waiting to take advantage of the temporary difficulty which might be felt from time to time by one of the divisions. Judge Advocate-General Larpent commented on the phenomenon that "Bread and corn are so cheap and abundant this year in the Castiles, that they are quite without demand, and it even answers to bring Spanish bread up here to sell, above fifty and I believe a hundred miles"⁷¹. These speculators must have been quite successful in selling their wares for it to have been worth while continuing their operations, and they certainly induced a fulmination from Wellington about "the unnecessary encouragement afforded to the crowds of contractors and furnishers by whom the army is surrounded"⁷². Rice, meat and spirits though would all appear to be more common in tenders than bread, and in any case shortage of money must frequently have prevented commissaries in want from taking advantage of these offers⁷³. It was not until mid-February when the money shortage at the front was eased that instructions were issued designed to limit purchases from contractors, and one may suppose that had such excessive recourse to middle-men been taking place previously, the instructions would have been issued earlier. Altogether while noticing the presence of these men, we may conclude their importance in the supplying of bread to have been small, alike from the extensive use made not only of the base depots but also of the reserve magazine at

70. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17947, Ogilvie to Dalrymple, 28th December 1813.

71. Larpent vol II, p 106.

72. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17940, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 15th February 1814.

73. D.A.C.G. Head's initial reaction to his bread shortage was to request money to enable him to buy, but as he was not given any, here is one evident case of a unit in want of a supply but not able to take advantage of the presence of contractors.

Ustaritz which was only to be drawn upon in an emergency for the supply of bread, and from the several complaints from divisional commissaries as regards obtaining bread, that it was as much as they could do to supply the staff and the hospital without recourse to the depots.

CHAPTER III, Part B : Meat.

The meat supply presents a case of the Peninsular commissariat receiving only occasional assistance from England. The cost and difficulty of transporting live cattle on long sea voyages effectively ruled out the possibility that the army in Portugal should be supported in this way and only at the end of the war, when the allied advance to the Pyrenees had shortened their sea-borne communications with the United Kingdom, was such a supply undertaken. Kennedy, to whom the idea of shipping live cattle was suggested, wrote home on the 18th August giving his support to the scheme but it was not until October that Herries concluded an agreement with Messrs Daniel Callaghan & Sons of Cork whereby one hundred Irish cattle per week should be shipped for Passages and St Sebastian, nor was it until the end of the month that the Treasury sanctioned the arrangement¹. No record remains showing precisely how many of the animals arrived alive, though Larpent mentions the advent of one hundred and fifty about the middle of November, but in his memoirs Herries records that delays occurred in the shipments because of difficulties of convoy so it may be conjectured that the arrivals did not amount to the quantity envisaged. In 1814 the Irish supply appears to have been augmented by English cattle since in a letter to Ogilvie Herries announced the consignment of thirty eight large oxen from Poole with the promise of more to follow² but as in the next month Lord Bathurst ordered the cessation of all supply shipments to Wellington's army it seems unlikely that this additional resource proved of great assistance. Even allowing that the Irish supply, from November 1813 to the end of the war, maintained the intended level, and overlooking any casualties on the voyages still does not account for more than a small part of the whole supply to the army, as consumption in the closing stages of the war, variously quoted in Fraser's and Larpent's memoirs as three hundred a day and one thousand a week³, must upon a consideration of the numbers to be fed and probable weight of the animals have amounted to at

1. P.R.O. W.O. 57/6, Harrison to Herries, 27th October 1813.

2. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17928 f.51, Herries to Ogilvie, 1st April 1814. The salt sent with the cattle to cure any who died at sea had to be unloaded at Bordeaux as the Excise would have seized any brought back to England.

3. Both Larpent and Fraser spent time at Headquarters and could have had access to good information on such a point. Fraser says that his informant was Dalrymple, and his certainly seems nearer to a plausible figure than that provided by Larpent, who may have been guessing.

least one thousand five hundred a week and perhaps as many as two thousand.

While the contribution of the United Kingdom to the army's fresh meat supply was confined to a small number of animals in the closing months of the war, the home country proved of greater assistance in the supply of salted provisions. The army had evidently been well provided with salt meat in the period before the spring of 1809 and Wellington wrote on the 31st May 1809 asking that no more be sent unless it was requisitioned⁴. The circumstances of the remainder of the year which the troops spent mostly in Spain would not have entailed a high consumption of salt meat⁵, so the quantity shown in the January 1st return of provisions presumably represents the large store to which Wellington had alluded in May only slightly diminished. The January return showed one and three quarter million pounds of salt meat in store and though one million pounds were given to the Portuguese government in May 1810, this amount was exactly made up by a requisition upon England. Thus the drop in stocks to below half a million pounds in the return of the 30th November 1810 represents the consumption over the year. Unfortunately, apart from the consignment of two hundred tons of salt fish in December 1810⁶, no record remains of the shipments of salted provisions between the end of 1810 and early 1813. That such shipments did take place, likely, as it is hardly to be supposed that the commissariat would have wasted scarce funds buying a commodity that could so easily be supplied from England, is also suggested by two letters, one in early 1811 confirming that Kennedy's requirement of the barrel size to be used for salt meat had been passed on to the Commissioners for Victualling⁷, and another in 1812 announcing that the Victualling Board had a certain number of hundred pound barrels (Kennedy's specified size) remaining and that they were to be sent out⁸. Perhaps the small amount (a quarter of a million pounds) sent in March 1812 represented the tail end of a regular supply, since by the end of the year it was necessary for Kennedy

4. Supplementary Despatches VI p 273. Wellington to Castlereagh, 31st May 1809.

5. Except for a short period near Abrantes, see below.

6. It seems most unlikely that the fish would have been issued to the British troops or would have arrived in time to be issued to the Spanish. Probably the Portuguese Ordenanca ate it, assisted by muleteers and similar commissariat employees.

7. P.R.O. W.O. 57/3, Harrison to Gordon, 21st January 1811.

8. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132, Herries to Kennedy, 9th March 1812.

to make a requisition for two million pounds, and another two million early in 1813⁹. Three of the four millions thus requested had arrived by the time the army left Portugal. The supply of salt meat to the North Spanish and French coasts appears to have been intermittent amounting to about one and a half million pounds between June and October¹⁰, and at the end of November the Treasury sanctioned a regular supply of one hundred and twenty five thousand pounds a month to be sent by the Commissioners of Victualling, this comparatively small quantity suggesting that the supply in the previous half year had been as much as the army needed.

The usefulness of the salt meat which arrived in the Peninsula was limited by the fact that the army's transport was never sufficient to carry it far from the coast or the rivers as well as maintaining the necessary supply of bread to the troops. Thus live meat, even if purchased at greater expense, was usually a more economical supply inland than the salted variety. Indeed salt meat is rarely heard of in the interior. The provision return of the 1st March 1810 shows about one and a half million pounds of salt meat in store in Portugal of which 73% was held on the coast at Lisbon, Coimbra and Oporto and 24% on the navigable reaches of the Tagus at Santarem and Abrantes. The fact that a few thousand pounds of salt meat were held at Almeida and that some issues of the same commodity took place to the advanced cavalry at Alpalhao and Monforte in the summer of 1810 should not obscure this great inequality of distribution. The field divisions saw little of salt provisions in later years either as accounts of issues to the Portuguese troops attached to them demonstrate. In 1812 and 1813 the proportion of salted meat (and fish) to all meat so issued was only 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ %¹¹. Only for two periods of the war does the field army's almost invariable diet of fresh meat seem seriously to have been adulterated. While in the lines of Torres Vedras and on the Rio Maior the short distances to be covered by transport made it possible to use salt provisions and Wellington ordered on the 26th October 1810 that salt meat be issued two days a week to all regiments.

9. The return of stores at Belem on the 15th December 1812 shows no salt meat at all. It was however being universally issued at that time at Lisbon, possibly under Sampaio's contract. See P.R.O. W.O. 57/43, Kennedy to Herries, 13th January 1813.

10. The sources for this supply, W.O. 62/18 and 58/134 and the Ogilvie papers, are all in different ways incomplete for this period so the figure of 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds is strictly a minimum rather than a certain quantity, though the gaps are not great.

11. P.R.O. W.O. 57/45. These do not seem to be complete accounts of all deliveries to Portuguese troops in the field, but the above calculation does not depend for its point on the total but on the proportion.

The second occasion was in early 1814 when the difficulty of providing fresh meat from the rear obliged the commissariat to issue salt meat to all whose access to the coast was adequate. Even some of the inland troops were supplied in this way, and the 3rd and 7th divisions had to be provided with extra mules for the purpose¹². The usual use of salt meat however was as issues to detachments marching from the rear, to the garrison troops in the bases, to the hospitals or to the muleteers and other subordinate employees of the commissariat who commonly, at least from 1812, received a ration of salt fish in lieu of part of their pay, "with which the Muleteers are extremely well satisfied" wrote Bisset¹³. The salt fish also proved useful for making over to the Portuguese government on account of the subsidy, so much so that Pipon wrote home in September 1813 for a regular supply of it. A note on his letter records that this request was not acted upon.

While uses were thus found for the salt provisions supplied from home, these did not cover more than a small part of the army's consumption and as we have seen the fresh meat provided from the United Kingdom was not a very considerable supply. The same difficulties of conveyance which hindered the sending of cattle from home also prevented any other imports from areas far from the coasts of the Peninsula. In the summer of 1812, A.C.G. Purcell was despatched to the Azores to report on the supplies that could be obtained thence, among other commodities the number of cattle that could be withdrawn "without distressing the inhabitants or advancing the price"¹⁴. His opinion was that eight hundred and fifty bullocks could be purchased within these conditions but the Treasury, on consideration of his report, decided that the difficulties of such traffic would outweigh the advantage and directed that "the shipment of cattle should be abandoned"¹⁵. Certainly the trouble and expense of transport seems hardly justified for the provision of less than a week's supply of meat to the army. On the other hand the Barbary states, whose wheat contribution had been somewhat disappointing during the war years, appear to have featured considerably in the cattle supply, in proportion as the stocks in Spain and Portugal dwindled under the combined

12. In June and July 1809 the hutted troops in and around Abrantes were given salt rations, but this was only for a short period, a fortnight at the most.

13. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17947. Bisset to Ogilvie, 4th June 1812.

14. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, Purcell to Bisset, 3rd August 1812.

15. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 9th October 1812.

demands of the army's stomachs and the transport system. Although a Portuguese initiative was rebuffed early in 1813, the British, by the diplomacy of Sir William A'Court envoy extraordinary to the Barbary states, reached agreements with the rulers of Algiers and Oran for the export of four thousand oxen at a duty of fifteen dollars per head, and ten thousand sheep and two thousand oxen duty free respectively. These arrangements however were made too late. Wellington wrote putting off the arrival of these animals until the following spring when "the supply of forage (will) ensure them means of subsistance"¹⁶, and by the time the winter of 1813 was over the war was nearly concluded. While the official channels had been tardy though, private entrepreneurs had been busy. Early in 1813 General Campbell, Governor of Gibraltar, had complained that the activities of Jews and others had raised the duty upon cattle export from Morocco to twenty or even thirty dollars where it had been ten before¹⁷, and the object of the trading activity was explained later in the year by Bisset in a letter to the Commissary in Chief. Certain Gibraltar merchants have, he stated, "by means of a contraband trade withdrawn about 20,000 head within these three months to be sent into the interior of Spain; and, by the way, knowing as I do the extreme difficulty of supplying our troops in that country with fresh meat it is a Traffic ... that should not be too scrupulously inquired into"¹⁸. By no means all of the cattle that reached the army in 1813 can have been of Iberian origin.

From the preceding paragraphs it will be obvious that the role of the commissariat and other public bodies in England in supplying the theatre of war with cattle was small, and this fact gave to the provision of meat a character different from any other supply. The Peninsular commissariat was gradually forced into a complete dependence on private speculators who were themselves under no pressure to negotiate since their stock was comparatively imperishable and since they were not faced by any significant competition from overseas. This situation did not come about immediately. In 1809 the commissariat as well as finding some bullocks locally in Spanish Estremadura and receiving others under contracts from the rear, sent out

16. B.M. Add Mss 41513, Stuart to Green, 27th September 1813.

17. Campbell's interest was that his garrison was supplied, by a contractor, with $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of fresh meat per man per week from Morocco, hitherto at the low duty of five dollars per head.

18. B.M. Add Mss 41512, Bisset to Herries, 24th July 1813.

officers on special missions to collect cattle, Boyes and Ogilvie going to Azuaga and Downie into the mountains round Castello Branco for this purpose. By the end of the year however the fear of shortage is already apparent in Dalrymple's instructions to Downie: "Cattle we must have and whether we pay a little more or a little less is a very inferior consideration to the actual collection of cattle"¹⁹. From this time onwards the steady increase in the real price of bullocks marks the increasing power of the dealers in meat whose command of ready cash came to monopolise the northern markets in the period 1810-12. Only two areas of Portugal produced cattle in sufficient quantities to be used as food, the Alentejo and Algarve in the south and the areas of Tras os Montes and Entre Douro e Minho in the north²⁰. The latter, providing a more copious supply and being usually closer to the operations and cantonments of the main army, was of much greater importance, an importance which can be measured by the higher prices demanded for money in the Oporto market compared with the exchange at Lisbon which circumstance was occasioned by the large scale cash transactions of the cattle trade.

If the transactions between the commissariat and the dealers could have been restricted to a single channel, if only one commissariat agent or officer had been entitled to negotiate for meat although the price must still have moved against the department at least the supply could have been put on a regular, assured basis and any shortages could have been fairly distributed or allocated in a manner calculated to be as little inconvenient as possible in the given strategical situation. The experience of 1809 had already shown that if the field commissaries were prevented from making purchases on their own account a sufficient supply could not be guaranteed from the rear to compensate for this²¹. The resulting competition among various commissariat agencies, all experiencing a different degree of want, operated to the advantage of the dealers who could not be expected to negotiate a lower price in the rear of the army than they could obtain by moving their herds forward towards any division whose stock of cattle was running low and negotiating directly with its commissary. The obvious solution to this difficulty was not to forbid the field officers from negotiating for meat when necessity constrained them, but to fix a maximum

19. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17970. Quoted in Downie to Ogilvie 17th November 1809.

20. Naturally cattle cultivation did not stop at the frontiers but cattlemen in Galicia brought their stock to the fairs of north Portugal in search of high prices and similarly animals from Andalusia and Estremadura were provided for the troops in the south of Portugal.

21. For an example of a failure in the bullock supply from the rear in 1809 see Schaumann p 177.

price which was not to be exceeded in payments for meat in any part of the army. This system appears to have come into operation in 1810, the fixed price in the south being slightly higher than in the north, reflecting the somewhat easier availability of cattle in the northern sector. Unfortunately it was subject to a simple and quite unavoidable abuse. Since a herd of cattle would be sold alive the price was generally calculated upon an assumption of the average weight of the beasts, and it was possible if the price per pound was uncompetitive, to compensate for this by assessing the average at an unrealistically high figure²². This system of false averages was commonplace as early as 1810. "I have known what is no secret", wrote Kirton, "thousands of sheep from the Depot at Badajoz, of which unable to drag their weakness along, died 20 and 30 every day, and which (averaged at 34 lbs each) could not weigh above 16 or 18 lbs. They were more like Cats than Sheep. This is a well known fact..."²³.

The efforts of the Commissary-General to provide cattle from the rear to the forward units and thus reduce the power of the dealers over needy field commissaries, were never more than partially successful. Indeed Bisset claimed that before he took over from Kennedy there had been no cattle contract and the supply had been maintained solely by dealers who bought in the fairs north of the Douro and marched the stock to the army. Bisset, faced by the extra demand presented by the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo for bullocks as draught animals, appears to have taken the first steps towards organising and controlling a large scale supply of cattle from the rear. He made a small contract initially with Messrs Rozas and Bailey of Coimbra, intended to provide a small reserve from which the Commissary-General could offer assistance to those field commissaries most in need of a supply, and soon afterwards extended the agreement to the provision of four hundred head per week, over a ten week period²⁴. Rozas and Bailey failed to honour this commitment and attempts to meet the ensuing shortage by direct purchasing north of the Douro were confronted by a coalition among the dealers in cattle who demanded very high prices. For the main campaign of 1812 therefore,

22. Various methods of averaging were employed. Two or three of the animals might be slaughtered and the issuable remains weighed, or a visual estimate might be made of the weight of ten or twenty and the average weight based upon this.

23. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17936 f. 38. Kirton to Ogilvie, 27th June 1813.

24. Bullock consumption at this time was above a thousand a week.

which began only two months after his report to London about these events, Bisset was obliged to look to a variety of sources for his meat supply. Some cattle were bought by Mackenzie at Oporto and Boyes at Lamego paying the prices the dealers demanded, and White at Corunna was asked to collect as many as he could in Galicia and the Asturias. An agreement smaller than the one envisaged seems also to have been effected for a weekly supply of about two hundred and fifty bullocks for a three month period²⁵. Bisset's department orders however stress the importance of the field commissaries continuing to use their initiative in obtaining meat supplies at reasonable prices and it is evident that his measures, originally intended to centralise control over the meat supply, failed to reduce the competition existing among various commissariat agencies, though going a part of the way towards providing a resource alternative to the dealers for the commissaries in the field.

Before 1812 the field commissaries had been very much on their own. Some of them must have enjoyed at least partial contracts, a comparison of which system with regular purchases was made by Ogilvie in 1810. A depot acquired by purchase subjected the public to the loss on averaging weights as well as by possible disease or escapes and also threw upon the commissariat the task of guarding the herds and providing pasture. On the other hand a depot maintained by contract would provide meat by real weight and leave the attendant risks and duties to the contractor. The gentleman whose contract the above comparison favoured, Mr Dillon, did supply by such a contract to Portalegre in 1810 and also to headquarters at the end of the year and in early 1811. Local purchases were however so frequent among all the scattered parts of Hill's command at all times during 1810 that it cannot be said that Dillon's contract, or that of Mr Fletcher who also supplied to Portalegre²⁶, formed the major part of the 2nd division's supply and it must have been mainly useful as a reserve stock. Kirton, who was serving at Portalegre, bought nine hundred and two bullocks and four thousand eight hundred and twelve sheep, totalling perhaps four hundred thousand pounds of

25. Bisset's report mentions this agreement without stating the name of the contractor and it is unfortunately impossible to say for certain whether the promised supply was forthcoming or not. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41 Bisset to Herries, 10th April 1812.

26. Both Dillon and Fletcher refused to supply any cattle if this obliged them to have dealings with the incompetent Mr Wechinger who they found both rude and dishonest. Mr Aylmer, senior commissariat officer with the 2nd division early in the year, was reported to have described Wechinger as a blackguard, but subsequently denied using the term.

meat between June and September 1810, so the Portalegre depot itself by no means received all its supplies by contract in this period²⁷. The advanced troops in the north also depended greatly upon local supplies of cattle, both those provided by the villages in which the troops were cantoned and those bought by the commissariat at Pinhel and Almeida and marched forward.

Bisset's new policy of supplying cattle in large numbers from the rear took a little time to come into operation because of Rozas and Bailey's failure and the combination among the northern meat dealers. The meat supply to Ashworth's brigade between January 25th and April 24th 1812 only came one third from the rear and two thirds from contractors or local purchases. Even a week before the opening of the main campaign Bisset had to remind his officers that meat dealers were "in their way extremely useful to the army, and should as much as possible be conciliated" and that "it should be the study of every commissary to subsist the troops to which he is attached on Sheep drawn from Spain, in the event of our entering that country"²⁸. Notwithstanding these qualifications it is evident that the Commissary-General intended to supply the troops in the interior of Spain principally with herds marched from Portugal under commissariat auspices. The intention was that one thousand and fifty head²⁹ of cattle (Bisset's estimate of weekly consumption by the main army) be sent forward every week from the depot at Ciudad Rodrigo, which in turn drew through Celorico upon Coimbra, Oporto and the cattle markets of north Portugal. While the army remained on the Douro these supplies must have been nearly sufficient to meet its requirements - the 6th division, starting the campaign on the 13th June, received two hundred bullocks on the 24th and a further hundred and fifty on the 15th July which supplies, assuming the division marched originally with a reasonable stock, should have been just sufficient to meet their needs in the first six weeks' operations - but when the advance to Madrid extended the line of supply difficulties arose. Some problems were caused by errors and incompetence on the part of

27. This supply bought by Kirton was sufficient for over three thousand men during these four months, over a third of Hill's British troops.

28. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17947 f.65 Department Order, 6th June 1812.

29. Though one thousand and fifty head seem to have been intended, even the Commissary-General eventually lapsed into the neater practice of referring to the herds as lots of a thousand head.

commissariat subordinates such as the clerk Fenton who abandoned his cattle somewhere beyond Salamanca and was next seen, days later, in Segovia ignorant of the whereabouts of his charge. "Mr Fenton ought to be drawn & quartered, he came here without his cattle & god (sic) of heaven knows where they are & all the Divisions badly off"³⁰, wrote Bisset, already sickening of the fever that kept him from his duties in the autumn.

By the beginning of September shortage of cattle in the rear and lack of responsible staff to whom they could be entrusted combined to disarrange the regularity of the supply herds. On the 2nd of the month the depot at Ciudad Rodrigo was reportedly reduced to one thousand head³¹ and D.A.C.G. Kensington decided to deem the order to send a thousand head weekly as no longer in force. Urgent letters were written to the senior officers of the rear depots, and elicited replies full of zeal and enthusiasm. Mr Drake at Coimbra had accumulated thirty four cattle and would send them at once, Mr Head at Celorico would hurry forward all cattle the moment they arrived, Kensington and Priestley at Ciudad Rodrigo were concerned at the impossibility of finding any cattle locally. Mackenzie at Oporto was the only officer in a position to provide assistance and he promised on the 26th September to increase his buying to one thousand a week which he would send on to Celorico. By this time too, it is evident that the practice adopted by headquarters of speaking about 'a thousand head' of cattle was only a manner of speaking. Hard marching over long distances so wearied the beasts that a thousand head setting out from Oporto might have reduced by a third or more before arriving with the army. No exact figures remain but where the Commissary-General was speaking of a thousand head, his subordinates acted with numbers like the seven hundred and ninety sent by Price to Valladolid on the 9th October, or eight hundred and fifty one sent forward from Ciudad Rodrigo on the 7th November. Even the journey to Ciudad Rodrigo itself produced casualties and Priestley wrote on the 6th October of three hundred and seventy cattle arrived the same day that he would send on immediately those still fit to march. The shortages with the troops resulting from these delays might be expected to appear towards the end of September, but by this

30. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17947 f.146, Bisset to Ogilvie, 12th August 1812.

31. Ibid No 17940, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 11th September 1812.

time the field army was divided between Madrid and Burgos and it would seem that the Burgos troops received priority. The forward depot for cattle was stationed in the autumn at Arevalo, a convenient point of departure for either half of the army. All the departures from Arevalo after late September of which I have found record are in the direction of Valladolid and Burgos, suggesting that the burden of the deficiencies fell upon the troops around Madrid. These included Hill's force who in any case had been excepted from the original commissariat plans for this campaign as acting along a different line of operation. It may be presumed that a certain supply from the southern markets followed these troops, that the contraband trade from north Africa via Gibraltar already referred to was mainly for their benefit and probably formed the origin of the supply which Routh, senior commissariat officer under Hill, describes himself to have obtained in this period: "I made a contract with a Portuguese Jew at Elvas for 20,000 head of cattle, which he punctually delivered within four months..."³² This statement lends force to the supposition that the resources of the south, after the withdrawal of Soult's army, were quite adequate to the provision of cattle for all the troops at Madrid and that, although the supply from the rear in the northern sector fell short of what was hoped the deficiencies were probably made up without the divisional commissaries having to fend much for themselves.

The dispersal of the army into quarters at the end of 1812 brought a recurrence of the old problem of cattle dealers playing off one commissary against another to push up the price. As we have seen, the stocks in north Portugal had been drained by the past campaign and the troops found meat as short as everything else. Indeed Conductor Morris found meat even harder to come by than the other ration items when he returned to Almeida in November. Accordingly Kennedy despatched Ogilvie into the country round Braganca with orders to buy cattle for the army at true averages and reasonable prices, the field commissaries meanwhile being once more limited in the price they were allowed to pay. After a slow start (by the 23rd January 1813, a month after his appointment, he had only bought twenty eight cattle) Ogilvie achieved some success in rescuing the market from the middlemen by buying directly from owners in Galicia and Leon. That his success was not greater was due largely to shortage of money. Kennedy in the early part of 1813

32. Routh p. 56.

was still in the course of paying the huge debts of 1812 and though he did his best to provide cash, could only afford 100,000 dollars over three months rather than the 30,000 per week for which Ogilvie had asked. To support the Braganca operations however, Kennedy did order Mackenzie to stop buying at Oporto where the price went up in January to 190 reis per pound, and also fixed 130 reis as the maximum price at the divisions. In view of these restrictions it is perhaps not surprising that over three thousand five hundred cattle were passed through the Braganca depot in March and April, intended initially for the supply of the three divisions (3rd, 4th and 5th) quartered on the Douro, but in fact a quantity greater than they would have required over the period. Whether this supply proved cheaper than others would have been seems doubtful. Though Ogilvie restricted himself to a nominal price of 120 reis (he had originally hoped to buy at 100 or 105) he was unable to discard the practice of overestimating weight, nor could he prevent the bullocks losing meat in their march to the divisions. His own opinion was that the real cost, taking both these factors into consideration, was about 160 reis per pound. His sarcastic subordinate Strachan felt that 200 or more was nearer the truth.³³ It would have been possible for Ogilvie to weigh the cattle before buying as "4 large weighing machines with triangular poles - 6 small weighing machines"³⁴ for that purpose had arrived in Portugal the previous autumn and had been in use subsequently at Coimbra and Oporto. A rumour of their arrival up country however caused such alarm among the suppliers that Ogilvie feared their presence would do more harm than good and they were left on the coast.

When the army advanced to the Pyrenees it was attempted, as it had been in 1812, to maintain from the rear a supply of cattle previously purchased by the commissariat. The distances this time were very much longer and some of the journey was over rougher country so that very great losses were suffered in the cattle herds especially in the winter of 1813/14. Some diarists quote figures: William Graham spoke of a herd four hundred strong at Santillana of which ninety two arrived in France³⁵ and Larpent, after

33. Judging by the complaints from the divisions about the discrepancy between the weights on the waybills and the real weight of the beasts when slaughtered, Strachan was probably right. "The cattle sent here are so enormously over-rated that no guess even can be depended upon for their issuable meat if the way bill be taken as the guide", wrote A.C.G. Purcell, N.L.S. Acc 4370, No 17928, Purcell to Ogilvie, 3rd April 1813.

34. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 19th August 1812.

35. W Graham, Travels in Portugal, Spain and France 1812-14, 1820, p 81.

reckoning that "about two thirds only of the flesh which leaves Palencia etc... falls under the butcher's knife, besides the number which die on the road", quoted a case where "five hundred .. fresh bullocks, collected at Palencia, were marched all the way, three hundred only have reached Vittoria, and all the bad road and scarcity of food is yet to come"³⁶. Dalrymple, the best authority, may be allowed the last word. "It is quite lamentable the reports of cattle from the rear even at Palencia itself they are dying in 50 per day"³⁷. Thus although a good deal of commissariat energy and manpower were expended in maintaining the depot at Palencia and keeping a succession of herds ambling forwards to the army, it proved impossible, even during the better weather in summer and autumn of 1813, to dispense with the services of the meat dealers. These contractors no longer appear to have approached the divisional commissaries directly however, their cattle being either sold to headquarters and thence distributed, or supplied to the divisions under contracts made with the Commissary-General rather than with the field commissary. Thus some kind of regulation was maintained and the worst perils of competition avoided.

The fact that the dealers were enabled to bring cattle to the army in quite large numbers presumably without suffering the losses on the road that the commissariat experienced and which would surely have deterred a private speculator, suggests that the department's arrangements are open to criticism. A large part of the meat supply in the Pyrenees and France came from contracts and large scale purchases. Local purchases were rare, though a few head were obtained from the Baztan valley and near Arrauntz when the army first arrived, until March when the military operations opened wider stretches of French countryside and meat became temporarily plentiful to the advancing forces. It is true that some of the cattle provided under contract came from France. Dalrymple bought three hundred and fifty French cattle from Don Ramon Martinez in January and the Maire of Hasparren supplied meat from France to the 6th division and some cavalry units between December 1813 and the following February. Nonetheless it appears that the speculators took better care of their cattle than did the commissariat. This may probably be attributed partly to their having more money, which enabled them to employ more responsible herdsmen and more easily obtain food for their herds on the march, and partly

36. Larpent, vol II, pp 92 and 132.

37. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17940, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 31st January 1814.

to the shortage of efficient manpower in the commissariat, which led to cattle often having to be entrusted to very junior or inexperienced employees. Although clerks were sent with many cattle herds it was often necessary to use conductors and similar junior grades for this duty³⁸ and while an experienced conductor was probably a better herdsman than a newly arrived clerk, the necessity for his employment demonstrates the personnel shortage which may have led to poor care being taken of the cattle on long marches. It is evident that the meat supply remained precarious in the Pyrenees as shortages and near shortages are continually being complained of by divisional commissaries particularly in January and February as might be expected, and as has been noticed earlier, salt meat was used in these months to assist the supply to the main army. That the commissariat was able to maintain a barely sufficient supply was due in great part to the private speculators from whose assistance they were very rarely enabled to break loose in the whole course of the war.

38. For example Conductor Stone, see B.M. Add Mss 38257. Kennedy to Priestley, 28th October 1813.

CHAPTER III, Part C : Alcohol.

Wine was available for purchase almost everywhere in the Peninsula and France and since it was as heavy to transport as other less obtainable provisions the most sensible course was to buy as close to the army as possible. However it was more economical to provide alcohol distilled, partly because each pint then provided three rations where previously there had been only one, and partly because per ration spirits were generally cheaper than wine¹. Indeed as the presence of the army for long in any one place pushed up the price of local produce reasons of economy also made it desirable to supply the troops as much as possible from the rear but it was not until 1811 that it was decided to send a regular quantity from the United Kingdom. Shipments before that time were intermittent and the total quantity sent was probably very small. Indeed so rare an occurrence was a supply from England in 1810 that D.C.G. Boyes who had made large purchases of wine in early June for the depot at Abrantes, was disconcerted to learn on the 10th of the arrival at Lisbon of rum from England. Five thousand gallons were to be sent to him and he regretfully admitted to having overbought wine though consoling himself with the reflection that the price was cheap².

Even when there were spirits at the depots transport limitations sometimes prevented their being enjoyed by the advanced units. The rum that took Boyes by surprise was to be sent on towards Portalegre soon after the 10th June but had not arrived there by the end of the month because of difficulties of carriage. The advanced troops and the depots which supported them were very dependent on the neighbourhood where they were stationed for their alcohol supply. The light division on the Coa drank wine almost exclusively, much of it obtained from Almeida which depot in turn received wine only partly from the commissariat at Pinhel and partly from several Juiz de Fora of the locality. The fact that it was wine strongly suggests that it was not purchased far from its place of consumption. In the southern detachment of the army wine was also considerably drunk in 1810 although the Portalegre

1. A pint of wine weighs nearly $1\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. Contrary to the case of bread, the more convenient issue was in the case of alcohol the more popular. "I believe the doctors don't approve of rum for the men but if it is to be used as the men like it and it keeps them in good humour.." wrote Ogilvie. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17936, Ogilvie to Herries, 17th July 1813.

2. Ibid No 17902, Boyes to Ogilvie, 7th and 10th June 1810.

depot usually kept at least a small stock of spirits³. Such spirits as the brigades received from the rear were normally kept as a reserve and local wine provided where possible which it generally was save in the thinly populated area near Castello Branco where several units received only occasional alcohol issues in August. This pattern of local wine being drunk and spirits stored in reserve for sudden marches or other emergencies remained the same late into 1811, the army drawing only a small part of its alcohol from the rear though the practice of individual units depended greatly on how close to a major depot or how well endowed with transport they happened to be.

In summer 1811 Messrs Idle & Co offered to arrange a regular supply of rum from the United Kingdom and Kennedy was asked for an estimate of his requirements⁴. It was arranged that two hundred and eighty four thousand gallons of rum per quarter should be sent, a quantity sufficient over three months for approximately 75,000 men. Imported rum was much consumed in late 1811 and during that part of 1812 when the army was close to its depots, but the sensible plan of importing spirits to save money and to reduce expenditure in the Peninsula where cash shortage was a constant embarrassment was only a partial success because the pressure on transport was too great to permit every commodity to be brought from the rear when the forces advanced into Spain. Naturally spirits were the first supplies to be left behind because of their relatively easy availability, albeit at a high price, in the interior⁵. For this reason the first two shipments were not used up and Bisset wrote in April to postpone the next delivery. Thereafter no more rum arrived in the Peninsula until a certain Mr Newman shipped out to Lisbon towards the end of the year a cargo which he hoped the commissariat might buy.⁶ Kennedy decided the rum was overpriced and declined to purchase it⁷.

3. For example 565 gallons of rum on the 11th May 1810 which would have been barely two days' supply to the southern army. The receipts preserved in the Ogilvie papers show that both Ogilvie and his deputy Kirton bought large quantities of wine in the summer of 1810. Ogilvie alone bought about 85,000 pints between the 25th June and 24th July.

4. P.R.O. W.O. 58/131, Gordon to Kennedy, 25th July 1811.

5. This scheme also suffered from the fact that at this time of year the Victualling Board's transports found it "attended with some inconvenience and hazard" to cross the bar either at Oporto or Figueira and the rum had accordingly to be landed at Lisbon whence it could not so easily be transported to the army, at that time preparing for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo. Ibid 57/4, Harrison to Herries, 17th February 1812.

6. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy 24th October 1812 and 3rd February 1813.

7. Apparently Newman had already sold part of the consignment to the Lisbon agent of the Commissioners of Victualling and wanted a higher unit price for the remainder. Ibid 58/57 Herries to the Commissioners of Victualling, 16th February 1813.

presumably having plenty still in store as he asked for only thirty thousand gallons per month from home in the first quarter of 1813. It is clear from these figures that at most half the quantity of spirits consumed by the army in 1812 can have been imported and very likely less than that as in early 1813 the army was in winter quarters well located to receive supplies from the coast yet Kennedy only asked for the resumption of shipments at one third of the old rate, which suggests that a good deal of the 1812 rum must still have been in the magazines at the end of the year⁸. The practice of importing spirits for the army was never dropped during 1813 - quantities of rum are discovered among the earliest shipments to arrive on the north Spanish coast in July and August - yet never restored to the proportions envisaged in late 1811. Any conclusion must be tentative yet it would seem reasonable to estimate that the army in 1813/14 depended upon imports for less than a half, probably about a third of its alcohol intake.

The precise experience of individual units confirms the intermittent nature of the supply from the rear even during the period of regular imports. In 1812 every kind of supply was brought into service, local purchase, small contracts and purchase in the rear. In the three months from the 25th January to the 24th April 1812 Ashworth's brigade received two thirds of its alcohol from the depots, almost exclusively rum, and the remaining third, of which nearly 60% was rum, from contractors. Later in the year the proportion of wine was normally much greater as the transport was increasingly unable to cope with the army's demands for both bread and spirits. Indeed Bisset wrote in August that unless the bread supply was assured alcohol was not even to be bought locally with the commissary's scarce funds, and hinted that it did not matter if this meant occasional lapses in the alcohol issue, "which does not form any part of the soldier's ration"⁹. In fact there is no direct evidence of any serious failures of the supply, but certainly the 6th division during July and August was living mainly off wine obtained from day to day.

8. P.R.O. W.O. 57/40. Pison's controversial return of stores at Belem on the 15th December 1812 shows over 50,000 gallons of spirits in store.

9. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17947, Bisset to Ogilvie, 9th August 1812.

Both rum and wine were also procured by the intermediate depots. Salamanca for example benefited from a regular contract, at least from July onwards, with Sr Antonio da Pessoa who undertook to provide eighty to a hundred thousand quartilhos of wine at three thousand rations per day¹⁰. The agreement presumably proved satisfactory as it was renewed in September. Apart from this contract, the depot also made purchases of rum when supplies ran short and the price was right. Indeed rum was easily available in the interior but the merchants demanded very high prices. Salamanca was offered some in September at 440 reis the pint but headquarters was only paying 380 reis so the tender was rejected¹¹. To save paying these rates efforts were made to keep up at least a partial supply from the rear. During July Mr Major forwarded wine through Vila Velha towards the northern depots and in September A.C.G. St Remy tried to meet Ogilvie's request for twenty five pipes of wine per week, a small enough quantity in itself, sent forward to Salamanca from San Joao and Quinta dos Carvalhos but was unable to do so for lack of transport¹². That these attempts had so little success indicates that the depots of Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo were being effectively supplied with bread and corn only at the expense of spirits, and so usually had none of the latter to forward. The result appears in the Salamanca depot's return of stores acquired and despatched between the 15th and 25th September 1812. Rum (22,345 pints) is "received by purchase" which must often have been the case in Spain during the summer and autumn of 1812¹³.

In 1813 and 1814 the practice of forwarding spirits as much as possible from the rear was maintained but once again a complete supply could not be kept up. There were even deficiencies while the troops remained in

10. 1,248 quartilhos comprised a Lisbon pipe, reckoned to equal 140 English gallons. Thus a gallon equalled nearly nine quartilhos and the quantity supplied by Sr Pessoa would have lasted twenty four to thirty days.

11. The department's insistence on the lowest price had the obvious disadvantage that the quality was often low too. "Don Marizo's rum is really two parts water" complained Cairns in October. As he supplied the hospital this was possibly no bad thing. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17891, Cairns to Ogilvie, 20th October 1812.

12. Ibid No 17936, f.124, St Remy to Ogilvie, 12th September 1812.

13. Ibid No 17879, f.15.

cantonments, as appears from the fact that Mr Cairns had to buy rum for the 2nd division in May 1813¹⁴. Later Ogilvie bought various wines and spirits at Santander¹⁵, sufficient for the troops in the vicinity and to keep a certain supply going forward to Passages, but not at all enough for the twenty thousand rations per day he reckoned were issued from the Passages depot¹⁶. Even these purchases were stopped by Kennedy's order in the middle of July. Towards the end of the year various means of supply were in use among the divisions, recourse to contracts being the most common. "Rum is furnished by a contractor for that article"¹⁷ wrote D.A.C.G. Head, attached to the 3rd division, in November. The 7th division also employed a contractor for rum but bought wine in the country as well¹⁸ and even the 4th division, well supplied from the rear in all other articles according to Mr Carey's account, required a contract for the supply of rum alone. It is evident that the army's needy state in the matter of spirits attracted so many merchants that a rum surplus developed in 1814, not in the army's stores but in the hands of would-be contractors, who proceeded to dispose of it by making deals in other commodities contingent upon the commissary buying a certain amount of rum as well, "a proportion of rum to enable the dealers to come forward upon fair terms"¹⁹ as one commissary expressed it.

It should not be imagined that an agreement with a contractor necessarily guaranteed a trouble free supply, for not all the arrangements were as convenient as that enjoyed in December by the 7th division where, besides the low price already noted, the supplier agreed to keep his stock always immediately in rear of the division and receive payment for it only as wanted. In January a new contract for the supply of the 4th and 7th divisions was

14. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16541 f.1. He bought 5,150 pints which would have lasted the division two days.

15. French and Catalonian brandy and Cuba rum, altogether about 80,000 rations.

16. On the 17th July 1813 there were at Passages only 609 gallons of rum equal to 14,616 rations.

17. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17875, Head to Ogilvie, 30th November 1813.

18. The wine cost 4 reals a pint (one ration) whereas the rum was supplied at 10 reals a pint (three rations). Mr Cuming had negotiated a competitive price from his contractor; the 6th division were paying 12½ reals a pint for rum at this time and the 4th division 11 reals.

19. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17902, Buckham to Ogilvie, 10th February 1814.

made by Dalrymple with Sr Ribeiro, supposed to commence on the 10th. No spirits however appeared at the 7th division cantonments until the 14th and then only two three day batches arrived during the next ten days. Despite the failure being mentioned to Dalrymple matters did not improve for on the 4th February the supply to the 7th division remained "most irregular and uncertain"²⁰. In the middle of February the supply to the 4th division failed entirely and ultimately the division commissaries were permitted to make their own arrangements elsewhere for the spirit supply in early March. Such failures as these were, along with the high cost of such procurement, the penalty for the commissariat's inability to keep up the rum supply from the rear. It should however be remembered in the department's favour that reserve stocks were at all times held, at the coastal depots and also inland, against sudden emergencies so that the army's dependence upon contractors for spirits was never complete. It should also be noted that of the four main heads of supply we are considering alcohol was by far the least important as regards the health and nourishment of the army, and the policy of concentrating the department's resources upon providing bread (meat being a rather different case) as the first priority seems thoroughly sensible.

20. N.L.S. Acc 4370, No 17960, Cuming to Ogilvie, 4th February 1814.

CHAPTER III, part D : Forage and Forage Corn.

The horses' ration was made up of two component parts. The first almost always consisted of some variety of grain, barley or oats or Indian corn (maize) being most common, and although local species of pulse or beans also featured occasionally these commodities were collectively known as forage corn. The other element in the supply was simply described as forage and was intended to consist of straw (long forage) or hay but shortage of these foodstuffs regularly compelled reliance on alternative means of nourishment. The quantity allotted to each animal was a matter of some calculation since the constitution of either part of the ration might affect the amount issued in the other. Thus although the basic ration may be taken to be ten pounds of barley or Indian corn or twelve pounds of oats to fourteen pounds of hay or straw (only ten pounds for English hay) a shortfall in either part would be made up in the other on the principle that one pound of corn was equivalent to two pounds of forage which was equivalent to four pounds of green forage (grass or unripe corn) if dry forage were unavailable. The complication arises therefore, at least in retrospect, of deciding at any given time what a horse's full ration comprised, how far a magazine's stock of forage corn might be expected to go and whether or not the animals of a particular corps were being adequately nourished. Nothing in General Orders for example enables one to measure the adequacy of the ration Schaumann provided for the 1st K.G.L. Hussars in April 1811, a mixture of barley, beans, garvanzos (apparently a vetch like plant), rye, wheat and maize¹. The practice of the commissaries themselves appears also to have varied. On the 26th December 1812 Frazer, on his way from Lisbon to the Mondego, drew twelve pounds of corn and twelve pounds of straw for each horse² (itself a proportion not in keeping with any order I have seen) while only five days later Larpent at headquarters stated that "ten pounds of straw a day is the allowance for the animals"³. Considering these discrepancies and reflecting that the bulky nature of all these supplies

1. Schaumann, p 298.

2. Frazer p 24.

3. Larpent vol I, Letter of 31st December 1812.

rendered their transport to and from magazines an awkward business, it will be apparent that what was available rather than General Orders must have dictated the precise nature of the horses' rations⁴.

This is particularly true of the forage supply which was intended to be procured locally under most circumstances. Kennedy's rule of thumb that a cavalry regiment needed one mule for every two horses show that the units were not intended to be equipped with transport sufficient to carry their full ration more than a short distance from the depot and the recollections of cavalry diarists and commissaries abound with references to foraging parties and the difficulties they encountered. Very little forage was provided from England in the course of the war, three million pounds of hay in the summer of 1809, two million pounds in February 1810, a further two million pounds or so early the following year and four and a half million pounds in the winter of 1813/14 being the only shipments that appear in the commissariat papers⁵. At the ten pound ration for English hay these quantities would have fed an average of 609 horses a day between April 1809 and the end of the war. Besides these shipments at least two experimental supplies arrived in Portugal. Six hundred 'Forage Cakes' went out in 1809 and a further supply of oil cake (about 200,000 pounds), used for the draught cattle, in 1812⁶ but neither of these arrivals can be felt to have had an important effect on the supply to the cavalry and artillery horses. Thus the supply of forage from overseas during the war years was scanty and furthermore transport difficulties prevented even those supplies that did arrive being available far from the coast or the navigable rivers, rather in the same way as has already been observed in the case of salt meat.

4. For the contingent nature of cavalry rations see for example Despatches VIII p 243, Wellington to Messrs Slade, Anson, Alten and Calcraft.

5. P.R.O. W.O. 57/2, Harrison to Murray, 18th April 1809 and Harrison to Coffin, 29th April 1809 and 57/40 Kennedy to Herries, 20th November 1812.

6. See variously P.R.O. W.O. 58/130, Gordon to Murray, 17th February 1810 and Gordon to Kennedy, 21st November 1810, W.O. 57/2 Arbuthnot to Coffin, 20th July 1809, 57/4 Harrison to Gordon, 13th March and 13th April 1811 and 57/6 Harrison to Herries 9th and 26th November 1813. However Larpent, vol II p 6, mentions obtaining English hay on the 17th October 1813 so possibly some figures are missing for the summer and autumn of 1813. One of the hay vessels of the last shipment apparently was lost into Bayonne. Larpent vol II p 83.

Forage gathered inland was sometimes collected into magazines for future use - large stocks of hay for example were gathered at Celorico for the winter of 1812/13, and similar collections were made on the borders of Portugal for that winter⁷ - but in general it is true to say that forage was collected as locally as it could be found by the exertions of the individual units and consumed from day to day as it was brought in. "This duty", as Frazer explained "... is severe everywhere, and renders the winter no season of rest for the cavalry"⁸.

Difficulty finding forage was an almost universal complaint in Spain and Portugal and various substitutes for the hay or straw preferred as the forage ration were consumed⁹. In summer the green crops could be eaten. This was the mode of subsisting the animals during the spring and summer of 1813 though anticipating the harvest was an inadvisable resort if the army would later be wintering in the same area and was not always permitted. At other times field grass, river grass, fern and chopped furze all went into the horses' diet. This shortage of forage necessitated the dispersal of the cavalry and artillery units as widely as was possible to keep the horses adequately fed and when the requirements of active service did not prevent it this was done so thoroughly that Kennedy grumbled about one issuing commissary being too few for a cavalry regiment since the day was not long enough for him to visit all their quarters¹⁰. Wellington was not exaggerating greatly when he wrote to Hill "officers are much mistaken if they suppose that any town in the Peninsula, however large, will furnish forage for a large number of animals for a length of time. The horses of a brigade of cavalry, or even of a brigade of artillery, must be separated by 20 or 30 in each village"¹¹. Such dispersal was not possible of course on active service when, in exhausted country or during the winter, the animals must have always gone short of forage. Two examples out of many illustrate the extent of the problem. Conductor Morris near Almeida in December 1812 recounted two foraging expeditions, the first of which ultimately yielded two cartloads of hay at the third village visited but the second produced nothing at all after two days of journeying and searching. Nor

7. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17946 f 103, Kennedy to Ogilvie, 29th November 1812.

8. Frazer, p 43.

9. Regarding Spain Graham wrote "Of hay they make but little; and a field of green grass is a rarity the eye is very seldom regaled with". Graham p 65.

10. P.R.O. W.O. 57/39, Kennedy to Gordon, 10th July 1810.

11. Despatches IX p 605, Wellington to Hill, 9th December 1812.

was this ill success the product of lenity, as although "the inhabitants some of them wept bitterly in parting with their little stock of straw which they had laid up to serve them the winter... our orders were peremptory in case of not opening the stable doors to break the locks of (sic)"¹². Morris, fortunately, was only trying to supply a few mules and staff horses. Cavalry brigades the previous winter had taken the duty of watching Ciudad Rodrigo in turn, a month at a time, and found "there was no straw in the country, and from the horses being so starved, they eat the withered grass with so much avidity that they swallowed many of the stones at the roots, and died in consequence"¹³. "Some hundreds of horses" are represented by Tomkinson as being lost on this service for lack both of forage and regular supplies of corn.

Finding forage for cavalry horses was an arduous and time-consuming business even in most cantonments and under normal circumstances of active service it proved impossible to provide the full forage ration. This is shown clearly enough by the regular deterioration produced in the horses' condition by campaigning as well as by the evidence of memoirs and letters. The difficulties experienced led to irregularities, like Morris's peremptory orders already cited, which repeated General Orders (orders reproving irregular foraging appeared seven times between summer 1811 and late 1812¹⁴) were unable to quell. Forage however was not required for cavalry animals only. The artillery too needed horses in good condition to enable it to keep up with the army, General officers and their staffs needed to be well mounted and the transport mules both those carrying supplies and those on regimental duties had to be fed occasionally on their journeyings. In the Pyrenees shortage of forage, combined with some shortages of corn at the depots, became so acute that even these services were affected. It has already been seen how the cattle needed for meat suffered from hard marches and lack of fodder in the winter of 1813/14. Mr Buckham, one of whose duties in that winter was to supply Lord Beresford's staff horses wrote "Our horses would starve, were it not for the furze bushes; and even to obtain these, it is necessary to seek them at two leagues distance"¹⁵. "The mountain

12. N.A.M. Acc 7508-24.

13. W. Tomkinson, The Diary of a Cavalry Officer, ed J. Tomkinson, 2nd edition, p 121.

14. The General Orders of the Duke of Wellington, ed J. Gurwood. See 'Forage'.

15. P. Buckham, Personal Narrative of Adventures in the Peninsula, published anonymously 1827, p 334.

brigade of artillery are ... for three days without either forage or corn," wrote Ogilvie, Buckham's superior, the following month. "The staff horses are wasting & my own has been four days living on what my servants can collect from the Hedges"¹⁶. In December the headquarters staff were even sending to beyond Tolosa from St Jean de Luz for straw, a distance of forty miles or more. The harm done to the mule transport system by the need for hard work in such a denuded country will be pointed out in chapter V but can be said here to have been the most serious consequence of the forage shortage in the Pyrenees¹⁷. At no other period of the war however did scarcity of forage make itself so seriously felt among the transport animals, the cattle or the staff horses, although the cavalry horses often suffered and lost efficiency when on campaign.

The bad effects of forage shortage could to a great extent be prevented by keeping up the full corn issue. Unfortunately it was at precisely those times when the forage supply was inadequate, in winter or when the horses were forced to concentrate for operations, that the corn supply too was most likely to fail owing to difficulties of transport or lack of local supplies. Like the men's bread supply the horses' corn was intended to be supplied from the rear, the commissariat receiving assistance from England and other overseas sources at various times during the war. Until 1811 the United Kingdom did not prove a very fruitful source of supply. Two separate consignments of oats, eight thousand four hundred and ten thousand quarters respectively, were sent in the summer of 1809, but 1810 saw only one series of shipments, of a slightly smaller quantity, during May, June and July¹⁸. These three consignments considered over the period from April 1809 to December 1810 yield a daily ration for about 1,050 horses, under a quarter of the number to be supplied. Other overseas sources in this period were also few. On the 10th August 1809 one thousand six hundred quarters of barley brought to Lisbon by Mr John Phillips were purchased by the commissariat and in November, Mr Phillips being apparently desirous of organising a trade in corn from various parts of the Mediterranean to the commissariat at Lisbon, the Treasury ordered that Commissary-General Murray's

16. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17959, Ogilvie to Dalrymple, 31st January 1814.

17. Forage shortage also necessitated leaving the cavalry to winter in the Ebro valley, but since the terrain of the Pyrenees was not suitable for cavalry action anyway, little harm can be felt to have resulted.

18. P.R.O. W.O. 57/2, Arbuthnot to Coffin, 26th June and 20th July 1809, 58/56, Gordon to the Commissioners of Transports, 11th April 1810, 58/130, Gordon to Murray and Kennedy announcing shipments on various dates.

attention be called to the possibility of dealing with the merchant¹⁹. The offer was well timed as doubts were being expressed in Portugal as 1809 drew on about the adequacy of local corn supplies to see the army through the winter. Murray therefore bought Mr Phillips' next cargo, a mixture of wheat and barley, but although further transactions of the same kind were obviously intended it does not seem that the commissariat received any more supplies from Mr Phillips. The reason for this sudden breaking off cannot be seen for certain but three possible causes suggest themselves. In the first place Mr Phillips' second cargo was apparently much smaller than had been expected, a mere one and three quarter million pounds instead of the twelve thousand quarters hoped for, and it may be that he found it impossible after all to make large scale corn purchases in the Mediterranean at a satisfactory price. In any case on the arrival of the 1810 consignment Phillips became involved in an argument with Lieutenant Fleetwood, the Transport Agent at Lisbon, over payment for the transport he had used and if he was unable to recover any of his transport costs it may be that he found it unprofitable to continue the trade²⁰. The final possibility arises out of a letter from Gordon to Murray covering unknown enclosures "in order that you may be fully on your guard in all your dealings with Mr Phillips"²¹. The nature of the enclosures may have induced Murray himself to discontinue such dealings.

Whatever the reason for the cessation of Mr Phillips' operations, it certainly did not lie in the plentiful stocks of forage corn already held by the commissariat. The movement of a large part of the army to the Beira frontier during the winter of 1809/10 had placed it in a country less well stocked with corn than its previous cantonments and even before the breach with Mr Phillips Murray had investigated the possibility of drawing corn from Morocco only to discover that little was available from that source and that even that little was earmarked for Cadiz²². The Azores were another potential source of corn where Murray opened negotiations although the first arrivals thence did not appear in Portugal until after Kennedy had taken over as Commissary-General. In the late summer of 1810 Mr Harding

19. P.R.O. W.O. 57/2, ? to Gordon, 4th November 1809.

20. Ibid 57/38, Letters from Phillips 24th January, 10th and 24th February 1810.

21. Ibid 58/130, Gordon to Murray, 26th February 1810.

22. Ibid 57/38, Murray to Gordon, 16th May 1810.

Read the Consul-General consigned nearly one and a quarter million pounds of forage corn to Portugal for the benefit of the British commissariat²³. Considering these import sources over the period it appears that a further 400 horses a day, on average, were catered for in addition to the supply provided from the British Isles. It would therefore seem reasonable to assert that in the years 1809 and 1810 about one third of the necessary corn supply arrived in Portugal from overseas, the remainder being obtained in the country, less of course that amount not issued since both while the army was in Spain²⁴ and in the Beira cantonments the full corn ration could not always be kept up.

This impression of the corn supply being mainly locally collected while the army remained in the south is supported by the experience of the individual units. The cavalry at Vila Vicosa obtained barley from the local villages in exactly the same way as they have already been seen to have obtained bread. A large part of the supply however came not from the immediate localities where the units were stationed but from the wider hinterland of southern Portugal. The neighbourhoods, first of Estremoz and then of Evora and Beja, yielded supplies of barley and Indian corn while that quantity of oats which was transported forward from Lisbon was evidently considered as supplementary. "A depot of oats collected at that place (Evora)" wrote Coffin in October "will be a certain resource for the Cavalry at Villa Vicosa and Borba, when ever the supplies of the country may fail"²⁵. Later in the year it became necessary to search further afield and Boyes and Ogilvie were sent into Spanish Estremadura around Azuaga to buy forage corn, on which duty they successfully collected four hundred thousand pounds. The transfer of much of the army to Beira relieved the pressure on the resources of the south, which it had been feared might not have been great enough to preserve the cavalry during the winter, and also enabled the troops to draw upon the reserves on the Tagus and Mondego during the change of position. The stock of oats and barley in the depots can be seen to have fallen sharply in January of 1810 reflecting this new dependence upon the rear supply, and the combined quantity of these commodities fell

23. P.R.O. A.O.1 569/460. Indian corn contributed over half of this supply, with beans being nearly all the rest. A very small quantity of barley made up the total.

24. The deficiency of the supply in Spain may be seen from the fact that Tomkinson, rejoining his unit over six months later, reckoned "the regiment was by no means recovered from the effects of the Talavera campaign"; Tomkinson, p 21.

25. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17926, Coffin to Ogilvie, 11th October 1809.

steadily in the returns between January and the 1st May. Though this is evidence of a rear supply which must have provided nearly a half of the horses' requirements in these months the continued importance of the locality is reflected in the increase in the same period in stocks of Indian corn and rye all of which are likely to have been bought locally.²⁶

Unfortunately the provision returns cease after May and for the way the cavalry were supplied in the remainder of the year it is necessary to consider other evidence. Kennedy writing in July observed that the horses had 'often' been on half rations which seems likely to have been more from shortage of transport than lack of supplies²⁷. Tomkinson, who spent much of the summer at the outposts, found corn plentiful both there and earlier near Celorico, and stated that "the regiment was supplied in everything from the country"²⁸. Since only a small force of cavalry was employed in a forward position, it may well have found local subsistence easier than its colleagues in larger numbers further back into Portugal. In fact however the local supplies to the forward cavalry appear mostly themselves to have been collected further back, at least in the early part of the year. Ogilvie's arrangements for the supply of the 1st K.G.L. Hussars depended on fetching their corn from Almeida and Pinhel²⁹ which depots themselves were partly stocked with local produce but drew also on Viseu and Celorico where more stores were bought and assembled. It appears altogether reasonable to suppose that the shortfall in the imported supplies was usually made up by local purchase, particularly after the new corn began to appear on the market in July³⁰, rather than by reducing the horses' rations but that transport difficulties may have created temporary stoppages in the supply to some units. The rear supply was only partial too to the horses in the south. On the 20th May, after a period of high water had stopped all transport up the Tagus for some days, D.C.G. Boyes wrote asking for a regular supply of twenty eight thousand rations of forage corn per week for the benefit of Hill's troops,³¹ but this request was apparently not met - indeed

26. See provision returns in P.R.O. W.O. 57/38 and 39. Almeida and Viseu were the places where much of the Indian corn was held in March suggesting that the inland regions rather than the coastal markets were the major sources of this supply.

27. P.R.O. W.O. 57/39, Kennedy to Gordon, 10th July 1810.

28. Tomkinson pp 23, 29/30 and 37.

29. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17953 f. 22 seq.

30. Kennedy issued a circular reminding commissaries to pay a lower price for the new corn than had been current for the old, on 1st July 1810. Ibid No 17983 f.68.

31. Ibid No 17902, Boyes to Ogilvie, 20th May 1810.

in the last three weeks of June only seven thousand six hundred and thirty rations arrived³² - and the troops near Portalegre and towards Castello Branco fell back on other resources. Mr Fletcher the contractor already encountered, provided barley, various receipts are extant from local authorities and individuals for small quantities of corn, and the horses near Castello Branco were obliged to take rye as part of their ration since it was the only corn obtainable in that region. Short rations were possibly more common with the southern army, especially north of the Tagus, than with the horses in Beira, the 13th light dragoons in particular having to forage widely to keep up their supplies of both corn and hay.

On the 30th November 1810 Kennedy sent home a report about the alarmingly denuded state of the army's magazines and two days later requested a supply of three and a half million pounds of oats and the same quantity monthly thereafter³³. The reason for urgency was that the calls on the commissariat had risen since October by the presence of the auxiliary forces called to help defend the lines of Torres Vedras at the same time as the area open for commissariat purchasing activity had been reduced by the French invasion. So large a demand caused consternation in London, Gordon writing in reply "The amount actually exceeds that which is provided by me monthly for the whole army now in Great Britain"³⁴, but the Commissary-General was fortunate that his request arrived at a period of low grain prices in the British market and the year 1811 saw a determined attempt to provide at least a high proportion of Kennedy's demand. Between the 22nd December 1810 and the 21st September 1811 nearly thirty thousand quarters of barley and six thousand six hundred quarters of oats were shipped from England for Portugal, being an average quantity of about one and a half million pounds per month. After a short gap in the despatch a further quantity of over four million pounds was shipped in November. The corn crisis in Portugal was also the opportunity for a certain Mr Porcas to interest Lord Liverpool in a 'compound forage' of his own devising said to be lighter than barley though unfortunately more expensive. Gordon was ordered on the 30th March to contract with Mr Porcas for the delivery of eight hundred and forty thousand pounds at Lisbon, but was evidently not keen on the venture as he had to be

32. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17902, f.91, Boyes to Ogilvie, 1st July 1810.

33. P.R.O. W.O. 57/38, Kennedy to Gordon, 2nd December 1810.

34. Ibid 58/130, Gordon to Kennedy, 18th December 1810.

reminded of the order on the 1st May and finally on the 22nd May was allowed to agree for a much reduced quantity instead³⁵. No comment from Portugal on the value of the compound forage has survived, though it arrived in July or August and a certain amount of it appears on a way bill in transit between Lisbon and the Belem depot on the 12th August³⁶. No more appears to have followed the trial consignment. The total supply from the United Kingdom to Portugal during 1811 appears to have been slightly less than half of consumption during the year, some of the difference being made up by the arrival of Indian corn from America under Charles Stuart's arrangement with Sampaio, and the rest evidently by purchase either in the Lisbon market or inland, probably to as great an extent as had occurred in 1810 though representing a much smaller proportion of the total supply.

As has been seen, by November 21st 1811 the poor harvest and high grain prices in England obliged the government to prohibit the further export of corn thence. The oats and barley in course of shipping were not delayed by this measure but when Bisset applied in March for a further supply the Treasury refused and urged him to look to America and the Mediterranean to meet his needs³⁷. By this time however Bisset had already followed Wellington's suggestion and made an arrangement with Sampaio to draw corn from Ireland, a proceeding which concerned Herries who felt that one of the home departments would make more economical purchases in a home market³⁸. Although Herries issued no reprimand regarding the purchase of Irish forage corn, indeed complimenting D.C.G. Pison on the 'zeal & intelligence' which his explanations evinced, he apparently intended his disapproval to put an end to the trade³⁹, and was surprised to infer from Pison's report of stores at the end of the year that Sampaio was still active in Ireland. Kennedy's reply to his inquiry has not survived but was evidently only a partial disclaimer and by the summer of 1813 Herries had discovered that in fact "Mr Sampayo has contrary to your belief acquired by your engagement with him an unlimited power of exporting from Ireland, where I find by a

35. The reduced quantity was £300 worth which must have been less than fifty thousand pounds. P.R.O. W.O. 57/4, Harrison to Gordon, 30th March, 1st and 22nd May 1811.

36. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 G. 101.

37. P.R.O. W.O. 57/5, Wharton to Herries, 4th April 1812.

38. See variously Despatches VIII p 446, Wellington to Bisset, 17th December 1811 and P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, Bisset to Herries, 27th March 1812 and 58/132 Herries to Bisset, 20th April and 23rd June 1812.

39. Herries, who seems to have supported Bisset's request for more corn in the spring, may have been diplomatically attempting to convey the substance of the Treasury's instructions without binding the Commissary-General with a plain veto. The matter hinges on a private conversation between Herries and Kennedy in the summer of 1812.

communication ... from the Commissioners of Customs he has been considered as an officer of the Commissariat"⁴⁰. The probability is therefore that Sampaio was exporting from Ireland at least intermittently throughout the period between February 1812 and July 1813 when the arrangement came to an end this time as positively ordered by Herries. Only two records of quantity remain but judged by these the supply must have been a considerable one. The total for the months of May and July 1813 is roughly ten million pounds, an amount at least equal to two months' consumption without taking into account any other sources at all. It seems unlikely that these figures typify the supply, in view of the continued concern displayed by the Commissary-General to obtain forage corn from other overseas sources during 1812 and 1813, but the Irish supply is probably a great part of the explanation as to how the commissariat had both acquired a six month reserve stock of oats, barley and Indian corn by the end of 1812 and had been enabled in the course of the year to make over large quantities of these commodities monthly to the Portuguese government in lieu of subsidy⁴¹.

The ending of the official supplies from the United Kingdom led the Peninsular commissariat to search even farther afield than previously to maintain stocks of corn in face of the increasing number of horses to be supplied. North America again provided various commodities including Indian corn as it had done the previous year and these efforts were seconded by the new departure of 1812/13 in the commissariat's trading activity, the purchase, through the medium of Lord Strangford the ambassador, of "31 Cargoes of Wheat, Flour, Rice, Indian Corn and Beans"⁴² in Brazil. The Mediterranean also contributed, five thousand quarters of forage corn being bought at Cadiz for Portugal early in 1812 while shortly after Kennedy returned to the Peninsula he made enquiries of the Gibraltar merchant Abuderham about the possibility of obtaining corn from the Barbary States. The further pursuit of this object was entrusted to Sir William A'Court on his mission to the north African coast early in 1813. In the event the only agreement for forage corn he appears to have concluded was for one thousand loads of barley from Oran but in view of internal commotions in that state it cannot be said

40. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 13th June 1813.

41. Bisset provided nearly six million pounds of forage corn to the Portuguese in the first four months of 1812. Pipon said in December that he issued them one and a half million pounds per month. B.M. Add Mss 57377 Bisset to Herries, 18th May 1812 and P.R.O. W.O. 57/40 Pipon to Herries, 15th December 1812.

42. P.R.O. A.O. 1 571/469 and 470. One cargo was lost another captured by an American privateer.

with confidence that any part of this supply arrived in Portugal. Purchases in the Azores, apparently suspended during 1811, also recommenced early in 1812 when Pipon made an arrangement with Mr Read under which the latter agreed to buy and dispatch to Portugal about three and a half million pounds of Indian corn, of which nearly two million pounds had arrived by the middle of May⁴³. Although in July the Treasury officially approved of Mr Read's activities some doubts evidently remained about the expediency of purchasing such a large quantity of corn in so localised a market and the mission of Mr Purcell, already referred to in the section dealing with meat, was primarily for the purpose of ensuring that the islands were neither being stripped of forage corn nor excessive prices paid. As a result of Purcell's report and Bisset's covering letter Herries was informed in September that the Treasury "do not think it desireable (sic) to pursue this object further than in so far as the procuring of India Corn from the said Islands is concerned"⁴⁴, and by December even the India corn was felt to be too expensive. The supply from the Azores probably died out after December 1812 not from the issue of orders to stop it, but from Mr Read's finding it impossible any longer to market Treasury Bills in the islands.

The proportion of forage corn supplied between January 1812 and June 1813 (the recommencement of consignments from England) from overseas sources cannot be more than guessed at owing to the complete uncertainty about the Irish supply. It may however be confidently stated to have been at least a half and reasonably assumed to have been two thirds or more. In any case it is clear that throughout the period from 1811 to June 1813 the commissariat obtained at least enough corn from overseas to provide a much more substantial reserve behind the continuing local purchases than had been arranged in 1809/10. It is also clear however that the greater part of the import supply never arrived at the horses of the field army, being used instead to amass (over less than two years) a six month reserve supply, and in payment of the Portuguese subsidy which service probably received in 1812 half as much corn as the army's horses needed. In other words even had the imports for 1812 been equal to the army's consumption, three quarters of them would still have remained on the coast and that proportion would have had to be provided by inland purchases. Bisset's report indeed of January 1812 (but based on figures from the later months of 1811) states that over 70% of supply

43. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, Bisset to Herries, 16th May 1812.

44. Ibid 57/5, Wharton to Herries, 21st September 1812.

expenditure at that time was made inland at the divisions or at interior depots and, as has been seen, even if all the meat and alcohol consumed were supposed to have been bought locally, Bisset's figures would still imply the local purchase of half the bread and corn supplies⁴⁵. Thus although the situation of December 1810, when Dalrymple on the Tagus could write to a subordinate "Pray send us some forage corn if possible, we have come to a sudden stop at the fountain head and without assistance from the alentejo or other source we shall be sadly distressed"⁴⁶, was never likely to be repeated in the succeeding two and a half years, interior purchases obviously remained important in the forage corn supply with the army.

The army in the field evidently did rely considerably on local supplies of corn in 1812 and the early months of 1813. Purchases were made with the units and at the interior depots. In the months of July, August and September 1812 it was specifically forbidden that mules from the army at Salamanca or Ciudad Rodrigo should be loaded with corn, so completely was it intended that the horses should live from the land. Even nearer to the coast it was also preferred to let the neighbourhood do the work as may be seen in the case of the new depot at Sta Comba Dao. "It is very probable that the forage corn & spirits may be had by purchase on the spot. This will be a great saving of transport and of time"⁴⁷ wrote Kennedy. Considerable efforts were made to collect corn locally during the summer of 1812. Sometimes this was done by dealing with merchants, like Francisco Liano who provided Dalrymple with nearly half a million pounds of barley, or like Francisco Lopez who supplied barley to Salamanca. At other times the Spanish authorities were applied to, the Intendente of Salamanca supplying a small quantity of barley from the Crown lands⁴⁸ to that depot, his colleague of Zamora being asked to do likewise while the obliging authority at Avila lent Mr Price an officer to help enforce his requisitions when the cavalry depot was being collected in October. A similar emphasis on local purchases is apparent in the preparations north of the Douro for the advance of 1813.

45. B.M. Add Mss 38247 f. 29 Bisset to Herries, 16th January 1812. Bisset's figures are surprising at first sight but tally well both with the record of Bills drawn from November 2nd 1811 to January 18th 1812 (P.R.O. W.O. 57/41 enc. in Bisset to Herries 19th February 1812) and with the costs of the individual rations quoted in the estimate of 10th March 1812 B.M. Add Mss 57393.

46. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17980, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 5th December 1812.

47. Ibid No 17946, Kennedy to Ogilvie, 30th November 1812.

48. He supplied less than 50,000 pounds between August 24th and October 15th 1812. Ibid No 17981 f. 104.

Mr Johnstone went ahead of the troops to Tavora where he collected barley with the help of the Intendente of Alcanizes, and more barley was bought at Braganca to increase the depot there. The experience of the commissaries with the army and at the interior depots thus endorses the view that, whatever the precise import figures, much of the forage corn gathered from overseas and bought with Bills in the coastal markets remained on the coast, leaving the army to make up its requirements with local purchases. The local purchases themselves seem to have taken place more at the inland depots than at the units themselves⁴⁹, except in that period of the summer of 1812 when corn was supplied exclusively from the country which arrangement will be considered in greater detail in chapter VI.

From July 1813 until the end of the war it was intended that the army be completely supplied with forage corn from the United Kingdom. Herries' method of providing the supply rested largely upon a contract whereby Mr John Atkins Jnr of Walbrook in the City of London would ship between twelve thousand and fifteen thousand quarters of oats or barley to the north Spanish coast each month. In addition to these consignments the Commissary in Chief also intended to provide monthly a much smaller supply of six thousand sacks (probably about one and three quarter million pounds) of meal⁵⁰. Unfortunately little is known for certain about how much corn arrived in Spain under these arrangements. Atkins' shipments began in the middle of July and by the 11th August he had despatched about one and a half million pounds, or about four thousand quarters, of barley. Although this quantity is clearly less over four weeks than that envisaged by Herries it must be supposed that Atkins fulfilled his part of the contract to the reasonable satisfaction of the Commissary in Chief because no complaints about his contract survive and he was still supplying to Santander in December⁵¹. The exact fate of the meal supplies is equally unknown. The initial quantity of one million seven hundred thousand pounds promised by Herries in July had all been shipped by the middle of August but the regular supply

49. Ashworth's brigade for example only received 12% of its corn supply directly by contract or purchase during four months in the first half of 1812. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 E Nos 89 to 92.

50. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 18th June 1813.

51. Ibid 57/42 enclosed in Drake to Herries, 12th December 1813 may be found the arrivals of one solitary five day period, 6th to 10th December. The quantities are 1,421,256 pounds of barley and 393,356 pounds of oats.

promised thereafter cannot be said for certain to have arrived. The extant list of provisions sent to Santander between 11th September and the 27th October includes only five hundred and fifty casks (under two hundred thousand pounds) of meal which suggests that this supply may have been intermittent⁵². If the maximum supply promised was forthcoming between August 1813 and the end of the war it should have been just enough to provide the twenty thousand forage rations per day spoken of by Kennedy, even from December when the Commissary-General raised the ration to twelve pounds of corn in view of the forage shortage⁵³. Certainly in November the corn supplies in stock seem to have been plentiful, five and a half million pounds or over three weeks' issue, being held at Santander, at Passages and at sea which suggests the autumn supply, from Lisbon as well as from England of course, had been as much as the army's transport could distribute.

Apart from a period in July and August before stores had been accumulated at Passages or Santander, the difficulties experienced by the commissariat in providing forage corn to the units were mostly difficulties in sending the supplies forward to the new bases established on the French coast after the army's successes in October and November 1813. Considerable shortages resulted at the front in December although as we have seen the overall situation at the Spanish ports was favourable. "The fact of there being no forage corn whatever either at St Jean de Luz or Renteria at this present moment is the cause that I do not now .. keep up a regular supply of the article"⁵⁴, wrote Dobree on the 6th December, and eight days later the situation had not improved as "our artillery are without corn for this day & Mr Browne has no means of getting any without sending out a forage party at some distance & going himself to give the receipts"⁵⁵. The combination of winter, the relatively barren locality and the difficulties of shipping along the coast not only made life hard for the staff and artillery horses in the front line (the bulk of the cavalry wintered in the more fertile Ebro valley and drew on the depot at Bilbao) but also hampered the transport of all supplies since the mules, needing to subsist on their journeys by carrying their own corn, were kept waiting at the magazines. The extreme

52. P.R.O. W.O. 62/18.

53. Ibid 57/43, Kennedy to Herries, 5th December 1813.

54. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17952, Dobree to Ogilvie, 6th December 1813.

55. Ibid f. 31, Dobree to Ogilvie, 14th December 1813.

shortage of early and middle December improved later in the month as more corn was provided to the French coastal depots. The 1st and 5th divisions with their attendant cavalry and guns stated themselves to be well supplied at the end of the year but difficulties obviously remained, at least until the operations of February gave the army a wider area for local requisition. The 3rd, 4th and 7th divisions had all been without corn for the four preceding days according to the state of the 1st February⁵⁶. Thus even in the closing stages of the war, while the direct supply from the United Kingdom was in operation, local resources, such as they were in the Pyrenees, remained a necessary part of the horses' corn supply though certainly not to the same degree as in previous years. More than this unfortunately cannot be said in view of the missing figures respecting the shipments from Britain.

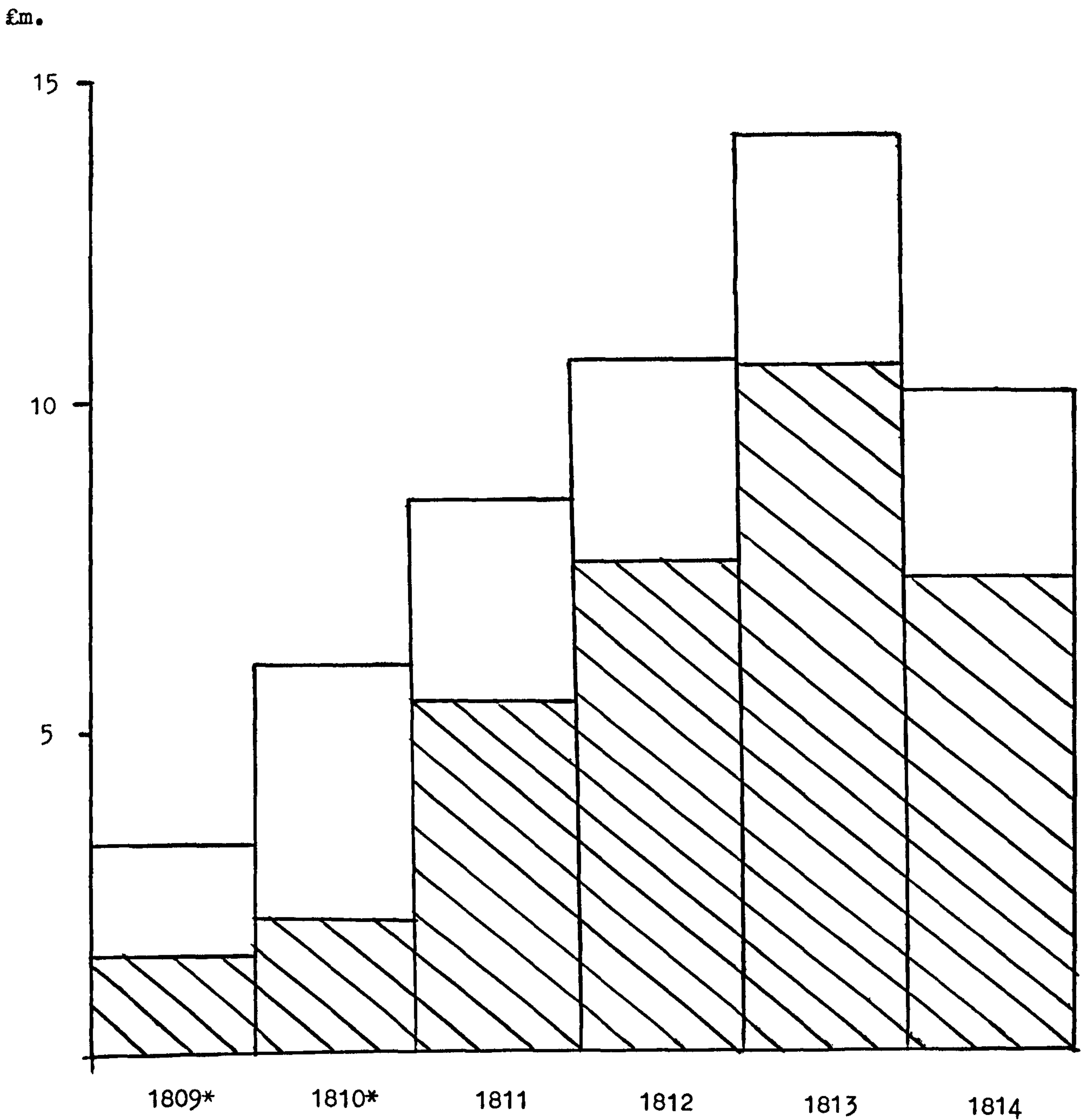
56. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17879 f. 25 seq.

CHAPTER IV : Money and Credit in Spain and Portugal 1809 - 14.

The Commissary-General, as well as being responsible for obtaining supplies and transporting them to the troops was also required to provide money for all the needs of the army. In the peninsula these resolved themselves under the following heads, presented here in roughly diminishing order of cost: Supplies of provisions and forage, Ordinary expenses on the Deputy Paymaster's account, Transport by land and water, Subsidy payments to the Portuguese government, Ordnance department (including engineers), Medical department, Commissariat contingencies, Officers' allowances like bat and forage money or staff pay, Money advanced or given to the Spanish forces, Pay of the commissariat department, Pay of hired labourers, Stationery and printing costs, Military contingencies,, Purchase of horses and mules, Purchase of clothing and field equipment, Indemnifications, Secret service payments and Expenses relating to prisoners of war. Plainly these items differed greatly in importance, the first head from 1811 onwards counting over a half of the total and the first four heads between them always constituting the greatest part of it.¹ Thus any deficiency in the supply of money would be most severely felt in these categories of expenditure, failure in any of which might involve the most serious consequences. Inability to pay for supplies would create hostility among the local people, necessitating forced requisitions most damaging to army discipline and distracting to the strategic planning of the commander, while failure to pay the troops would have a bad effect on morale, stimulate desertion and might eventually lead to mutiny. Leaving transport expenses unpaid would also alienate the inhabitants and provoke the desertion of hired transport, while withholding the Portuguese subsidy would constitute a breach of faith with the ally upon whose assistance Wellington's strategy utterly depended and who had already been induced to undertake commitments beyond her power financially to support on the promise of British aid. It was thus of vital importance that the Commissary-General was able to obtain enough money, if not to cover these expenses, at least to maintain an appearance of creditworthiness in the eyes of the inhabitants of the Peninsula, who were in the first instance the beneficiaries of most of the supply and transport expenditure.

1. Supplies, Ordinaries, Transport and the Portuguese subsidy comprised nearly 90% of all disbursements in the Peninsula in 1811, 1812 and 1813. B.M. Add Mss 38272 f. 152.

ANNUAL DISBURSEMENTS IN THE PENINSULA, 1809 - 14



Shaded area denotes that proportion of disbursements applied to expenses of supply and transport.

Sources: B.M. Add Mss 38272 f. 152.
P.R.O. A.O.1 569/459.

* The totals and sub-totals for these years are approximations only.

To demonstrate the primary importance of expenditure upon supplies and their transport, the total annual sums disbursed in the Peninsula between 1809 and 1814 are shown on the attached diagram (the figures for 1809 and 1810 being rather more approximate than the others) with the proportions of those sums spent on the purchase of supplies and on the transport system appearing as a sub-total in each column. Too much importance should not be attached to the annual division, made only for convenience of presentation, as the year in which a debt was paid is not necessarily that in which the expense was incurred. The worsening of the exchange against sterling which was the general trend of the war years has not been removed from these figures, nor has any allowance been made for price fluctuations, generally upwards as the war progressed though always attended by seasonal and regional variations, so part of the increase in the annual totals is not due to any real increase in the goods and services provided for.

Two methods of providing the necessary money suggested themselves. It could either be obtained by the Treasury from the Bank of England or bought abroad and then sent as cash or specie to Portugal, or it could be raised on the spot by the commissariat out of the money which naturally passed through the major trading centres of the Peninsula. Continuous friction resulted from the existence of these two separate sources of money. On the one hand the Treasury and the Commissary in Chief sometimes felt that the Peninsular department was not adopting the best methods to raise cash and reduce expenditure, and on the other Wellington and the Commissary-General often thought the Treasury was wilfully obstructing their efforts and deliberately failing to supply as much money as it could. It is the army's side of this dispute that has been most reproduced by historians of the war from Napier onwards, and although it is now generally accepted that the Treasury did indeed do its best in the face of most difficult economic circumstances to supply Portugal with money, it is still often felt that they objected unreasonably to measures taken by Kennedy and Bisset to procure money locally². The Treasury is rather harshly treated by this view as we shall see.

2. See for example S.G.P. Ward's opinion of Herries' interventions in financial matters. Op cit p 93.

When Wellington returned to Portugal in April 1809 by far the most important local source of cash was the sale of Treasury bills³ by Sir James Duff, the consul at Cadiz. In the second half of the year, at the suggestion of Charles Villiers then British minister in Portugal, an agency to raise money by similar negotiations was established at Lisbon and very soon the Lisbon market became the principal money resource of Wellington's army. The sole employment of Duff at Cadiz aroused criticism from Villiers among others who suggested that more activity and exertion might raise more money and was in favour of employing extra agents at Cadiz. Wellington's opinion (supported by Henry Wellesley and General Graham) was that "Duff got as much money as can be procured"⁴ and "I should doubt that two or three shops would sell more bills than one"⁵. The Treasury intended to have Commissary-General Drummond investigate the matter during his trip to the Peninsula at the end of 1810 but in the event so many other questions came to occupy Drummond's time that he never reported on Duff at all. Perhaps his silence can be taken for approval. In any case Wellington's wishes were realised and Duff continued to sell bills, at a $\frac{1}{2}\%$ commission, until the end of the war though whether he did prove to be the best man for the job is doubtful. This passage from a letter of 1812 written by a prominent merchant and financial speculator certainly implies otherwise. "Of Cadiz I do not speak; the exchange there is merely nominal, although Mr Duff has raised the government course to 48 $\frac{1}{2}$ d the takers of Treasury bills will whilst the commercial rate is 49 $\frac{3}{4}$ consist of those only who like the agents of Manufacturers are by their principals restricted in the selection of firms and who have positive orders to invest but in government paper"⁶.

Just as the employment of Duff rather than a commissariat officer to negotiate the sale of bills at Cadiz suggests an attempt to employ a man with local commercial knowledge and contacts in this important duty, it is not surprising to find as Lisbon agent a man displaying similar attributes.

3. Properly Bills of Exchange upon the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury. These negotiable instruments were payable in London, normally at thirty days after sight within which period they bore interest at 5%. Hereafter the word 'bill' will refer to a Treasury bill unless otherwise specified.

4. Despatches VI p 455, Wellington to Berkeley, 3rd October 1810.

5. Ibid p 184, Wellington to Henry Wellesley, 13th June 1810.

6. B.M. Add Mss 31236. Macdonnel to Pipon, 24th July 1812.

What is more surprising perhaps is that Enrique Sampaio, the Portuguese man of business selected for the task, should not have been disqualified from thus interesting himself in the exchanges from the British side by his pre-existent interest in them, as a major supplier of provisions under contract to the British army, from the Portuguese point of view. Very likely his appointment was a reward for useful services already rendered the British back in 1808, many of them still unpaid, and once again Wellington's opinion of him as a man of intelligence and integrity may have been important. In any case criticism of his activities when it came was directed not at his efficiency but at his rate of commission, Deputy Commissary-General Sweetland, head of the Gibraltar commissariat, feeling it excessive that he be paid 1/8th per cent on bills "for merely endorsing his name upon them"⁷. Upon Sampaio pointing out the amount of work his job really involved, the Commissary in Chief allowed the commission to remain and indeed it was exactly the same as that allowed to Duff for the same service at Cadiz⁸. Bills at Lisbon were normally negotiated weekly and raised various unpredictable sums, half in cash and half in paper money issued by the Portuguese government. This paper supposedly paid interest annually⁹ and was legal tender for up to half of any one transaction, but since the interest had not been paid for several years¹⁰ it circulated at Lisbon and Oporto at a rate of discount that fluctuated between about twenty and thirty per cent. In the provinces it did not pass at all, and the uses to which it could be put by the army were very limited. In effect it had to be disposed of to the Portuguese government as subsidy or to a merchant at Lisbon or Oporto or as pay to officers only, but since it was only admissible to the amount of half a transaction, without cash to back it up it was of no use at all.

The idea of supporting the Peninsular operations by selling bills at Lisbon¹¹, assisted by occasional shipments from Cadiz of money surplus to the garrison's requirements, was not treated with much enthusiasm in Portugal.

7. P.R.O. W.O. 58/130. Gordon to Kennedy, 26th June 1810.

8. Sampaio's commission was $\frac{1}{2}\%$ of which $\frac{1}{8}\%$ went on brokerage and $\frac{1}{4}\%$ covered the expenses of counting and transporting money at which jobs he claimed to employ five men. W.C. 57/39. Enclosed in Kennedy to Gordon, 18th July 1810.

9. 5%, less $\frac{1}{2}\%$ tax each year.

10. Though Drummond was told that the French while in Lisbon had ordered the payment of half a year's interest, the assertion being that Junot had previously collected a large supply of the paper and took advantage of the consequent drop in the rate of discount. Drummond was an uncritical collector of rumours, but this story might be true. B.M. Add Mss 57375, Drummond to Herries, 6th Oct. 1810

11. Some cash was also raised in this way at Oporto, but very small quantities compared to the sums at Lisbon. The proceeds of bills sold at Corunna and other coastal commissariat stations were applied almost exclusively to the expenses of those stations.

Wellington felt that this speculative resource was insufficiently reliable to support the very large expenditure that the war would inevitably demand and while he was right in supposing that the Lords of the Treasury in no way foresaw the soaring cost of his campaigns, he appears to have underestimated the market for bills at Lisbon. Charles Stuart, while agreeing with Wellington that the system was 'precarious' pointed out a different disadvantage of selling bills, namely that it was expensive in its effect upon the rate of exchange. He was unfortunate inasmuch as shortly after he made this point in the summer of 1810 the exchange rate fell sharply in the financial panic produced by the fall of Almeida and the advance of Masséna, but his observation was nonetheless true in a general sense and in December he was able to return to the attack. "The endeavours of the commissaries to collect £70,000 for the public service have this week raised the exchange from 68 to 70 Rs which brings the dollar to the price of 5/8d.¹² Every payment to the British army at the usual rate of 4/6d thus subjects his Majesty's Government to the loss of 1/2d per dollar".¹³ His solution for these evils was for the government to send more money, a remedy that Murray, Kennedy and Wellington had also been suggesting in the course of the year. After all as Wellington with his customary practical acuity observed, if the existing traffic in money is to the profit of the individuals engaged in it why should the government not be enabled to participate and save the profit?¹⁴

The Treasury did not ignore these appeals, though some confusion was created early in 1810 when Murray wrote home reiterating a request for £200,000 in cash and asking for £50,000 per month thereafter.¹⁵ Since a sum equivalent to about £250,000 was sent from Britain in the first three months of the year Gordon was surprised to continue receiving gloomy news about the state of the military chest and wrote in May to inquire where the over-spending was occurring. His letter crossed with a revised estimate from Murray stating monthly expenses to be £300,000 at the new rate of subsidy to Portugal.¹⁶ This too proved an underestimate but even as it stands it is easy to see why the Commissary-General asked for more support since he was selling bills for cash in the first third of the year, at Lisbon, only at the rate

12. This implies a discount on paper of about 35% which was unusually high. At the normal discount of early 1811 the dollar would have cost about 5/6d.

13. B.M. Add Mss 38361 Memorandum of February 1811.

14. Supplementary Despatches VI, Wellington to Liverpool, 6th June 1810.

15. P.R.O. W.O. 57/38, Murray to Gordon, 4th January 1810.

16. Ibid Murray to Gordon, 16th May 1810.

of about £200,000 per month. In May however the exchange rate was put up and money became easier for his successor, Kennedy, at least until the end of the year. All this while the Treasury were still attempting to provide money. They were unfortunate in that the time was one of bullion shortage caused by the revolts in South America which interfered with mining operations and confidence alike, and the problem was compounded by the French capture, early in 1810, of the quicksilver mines of south Spain, mercury being a necessary part of the silver mining process. To the general shortage of specie was added the disruption of the usual pattern of British trade brought about by Napoleon's Milan and Berlin decrees, recently vigorously restated by the Emperor as a result of his perusal of the, imprudently published, conclusions of the Bullion Committee regarding the damage these economic measures were doing to the British economy¹⁷. In spite of these difficulties more money was sent in 1810 than had been in 1809 - about £650,000 against £450,000 in the earlier year - but the expenses of the war climbed sharply in the same period and the larger sum was a smaller proportion of what was required.

The money sent came from a variety of sources and even included a shipment of 110,000 dollars by H.M.S. Fylla "much defaced by Chinese characters"¹⁸. Throughout 1810 however it was principally to South America that both the Treasury and the Peninsular department looked in hope. In July the opinion of Sir Francis D'Ivernois, Genevan pamphleteer and financial expert, was consulted and he thought that it might be possible to send paper to South America and thus draw out the specie circulating there, but that on balance any attempts to raise a loan in the colonies were merely anticipations of funds that should in the normal course of trade become available anyhow¹⁹. The summer and autumn were full of rumours of large sums open to speculators in the New World and an expectant atmosphere accordingly surrounded the arrival of H.M.S. Bulwark from Vera Cruz at the end of the year but her cargo proved very disappointing to English and Spanish hopes. Captain Fleming, commander of the Bulwark, went so far as to assert that the British agent at

17. Properly the 'Select Committee appointed to inquire into the causes of the high price of Gold Bullion and to take into consideration the state of the circulating medium and the exchanges between Great Britain and foreign parts'. The Committee's revelation of the true British export figures was unfortunate and its conclusion that convertibility should be re-established was no compensating help.

18. P.R.O. W.O. 58/130, Gordon to Kennedy, 3rd September 1810.

19. B.M. Add Mss 57403, D'Ivernois to Herries, 29th July 1810.

Vera Cruz had "facilitated a preference that was given to the French". It seems more likely that the agent's instructions which forbade the payment of more than a certain price for specie explain his being outbid by other purchasers. Wider instructions were at once despatched with H.M.S. Inconstant to bring back whatever could be procured but Kennedy was warned that for at least four months he "must look to resources within the Peninsula for his supplies of specie"²⁰.

If more money could not be provided for Portugal, at least the commissariat could be assisted by advice about means of local financing and possible economies that could be practised. Thus it was that in June 1810 Commissary-General Drummond, under orders to proceed to the Mediterranean as commissary of accounts, received a letter from the Treasury secretary apprising him of a change of plan. He was directed to Lisbon "to collect and transmit to their lordships the fullest information upon certain points relating to the pecuniary resources and arrangements for the British Service in that country"²¹, and more precise orders followed the next month when he was told to suggest any means that occurred to him of increasing the money supply or of lessening the demand for cash in the Peninsula. At the same time it was observed that he might find Exchequer bills to be a more negotiable commodity in Portugal than bills of exchange. Obediently Drummond devised a scheme for selling certificates of entitlement to Exchequer bills, which certificates he called 'exchequer actions', and having discussed the idea with three major financiers at Lisbon²² referred it back to London for sanction. By this time however the news of the much improved results from selling Treasury bills that followed the early summer raising of the exchange rate²³, and most recently of the great success of the August negotiations²⁴ that resulted from the military situation already alluded to, had arrived in London and the Treasury, anxious not to disturb a system at present looking so much more promising than anyone had supposed, directed him after all to confine himself to his inquiring brief and drop the 'exchequer action' preparations. Thus,

20. P.R.O. W.O. 57/3, Harrison to Gordon, 15th January 1811.

21. Ibid Harrison to Drummond, 15th June 1810.

22. Namely Quintella and Brancamp the tobacco contractors and Bandeira supposedly the third richest man of commerce in Lisbon. Drummond described them as the "'fermiers généraux' of this country". B.M. Add Mss 57375 f 51, Drummond to Herries, 22nd September 1810.

23. From 68d per milrei (1,000 reis) the rate rose to 69d and 70d in successive weeks in the middle of May.

24. Over £500,000 worth of bills were issued in August 1810 at Lisbon, most of which were negotiated for currency (half money, half paper).

for the time being at least, the Treasury came down firmly in favour of the system of financing by bills of exchange, and in view of the apparent upward trend of sums available in the second part of 1810 their decision does not seem to lack a basis in good sense²⁵.

Though Drummond assimilated a good deal of information about the general economic situation at Lisbon, his stay there after the suppression of the 'exchequer actions' idea was barren of any useful consequence, in great part owing to the suspicion and lack of assistance he received from headquarters. In the absence of information which only the goodwill of either Wellington or Kennedy could supply, he was reduced to making vague unsupported suggestions about how cash expenditure might be lessened. On the 30th October he eventually received from Kennedy in answer to a series of questions about financial matters a sheet of replies to each in turn which he described as 'evasive' and which were indeed as much devoid of good grace as of information. On the 3rd December he left Lisbon for Cadiz having achieved little more than to irritate Wellington and Kennedy by his mere presence in an investigatory capacity and to be made a sounding board for one of De Souza's interminable plans for founding a Bank of Portugal whose ultimate guarantor in some ramification or another was always to be the British government²⁶. Being present at Cadiz on the occasion of the disappointment over H.M.S. Bulwark, Drummond became involved in the discussion about how to raise more money in South America and in April 1811 departed for Lima armed with British securities and a licence to export up to three million dollars. Thus it was that in spite of Secretary Harrison's assurance on his departure that "this service will probably be of short duration"²⁷ he did not become available for other duty until the spring of 1812, one year and nine months after leaving England, when he returned to Cadiz bringing for Portugal as the sum of his year's efforts 337,823 dollars 7 reals, approximately three and a half days' expenditure for Wellington's army at the rate of early 1812. At least his efforts, for if not the most intelligent officer he was a very zealous one,

25. The August figure was not achieved again but after a sharp drop in September to below the old June/July level the trend climbed once more until the figure for January 1811 which was again around the £500,000 mark. B.M. Add Mss 38361 f 119.

26. Ibid 57375, Drummond to Herries, 3rd November 1810.

27. P.R.O. W.O. 57/3, Harrison to Drummond, 15th June 1810.

bear witness to the difficulty of finding precious metals protested by the Treasury against its army critics²⁸.

In spite of the resentment inspired by Drummond's investigatory instructions, implying as they were felt to a lack of confidence in Kennedy's willingness to make all reasonable economies, the Commissary-General was naturally very interested in saving the expenditure of cash as far as possible. The easiest target for economy was the Portuguese subsidy, not because its payment could be suspended but because, with the two armies operating so closely in conjunction one with another, it was both convenient and a simple matter to make a contribution towards the upkeep of the Portuguese forces in kind²⁹. This method was approved of in England but caused great accounting complexity and was one of the many details of the Portuguese subsidy that caused friction between the allies since because of their poverty and consequent inefficient system of transport and distribution large magazines of food in the rear were of far less use to the Portuguese government than their money value might have suggested. Since the aim of this chapter is to show the financial limitations under which the commissariat laboured an examination of all the confusion arising out of the subsidy to Portugal is not relevant³⁰ except to observe the very small proportion of it that was normally paid in ready money. Even in the first year of its payment, from the 14th March 1809 to the 24th March 1810, only about £380,000 in money passed from the British chest to the Portuguese, although the British calculation of the total obligation over the period came to £800,000. Later, as the amount of the subsidy grew alongside all the other calls upon the army's money supply, the proportion fell much lower. The first six months of 1812 saw

28. It cannot even be said that the sum Drummond brought back from Lima represented a net input into the British holding of specie since, before the commissary left Cadiz, Henry Wellesley had lent the Spanish government 500,000 dollars on the assurance of its being repaid in Peru. Much to Drummond's fury the viceroy at Lima could or would not honour the debt! B.M. Add Mss 57373, Drummond to Wellesley, 14th December 1811.

29. If the British had had to buy locally the provisions thus passed to the Portuguese there would have been no saving in cash expenditure but as has been seen they frequently made over supplies sent from England.

30. Herries wrote "I do not exactly understand upon what principle the subsidy of 2 millions is drawn for", at the head of a letter whose queries make it very plain that he meant what he said. Yet this was on the 10th May 1812, when the subsidy had been being paid for three years already, and he had been Commissary in Chief for over six months! B M Add Mss 57393 f 36. Memorandum for the Commander of the Forces, 10th May 1812.

only about £260,000 paid in cash out of the total owed of £1,000,000. The British answer to complaints about the shortage of money provided was always to produce ideas for improving public credit or reforming the Portuguese financial administration, while what the Portuguese wanted was a loan from Britain. The ingenuity that was expended planning these reforms and the lively disputes engendered by various schemes however do not affect the central point which is that the combined efforts of the Treasury and the Peninsular commissariat were inadequate to provide money to cover all the army's expenditure and that one of the effects of this was the payment of the Portuguese subsidy to a great extent in kind rather than cash.

As well as by somewhat abusing the subsidy agreement, a saving in expenditure could be effected by paying suppliers with bills rather than money. Naturally this recourse was only possible towards those creditors who had a use for a bill of exchange on London but at least some of the merchants who provided supplies at Lisbon fell into this category. It was customary in such circumstances to make the recipient promise not to negotiate the security in the Peninsula, to avoid the future competition with the commissariat's normal money raising activities that the continued presence of these bills in the Portuguese market would have offered. From the figures used by Bisset at the start of 1812 it seems that the proportion of the army's total expenditure that could be financed directly by bills in this way was 14%, enough to be a useful amelioration in a difficult situation but not sufficient to prevent the build up of debt. As many of the merchants who accepted payment in bills were American it may be supposed that the usefulness of this practice was at its height in 1811, 1812 and the first half of 1813 when the volume of American trade was at its greatest. Accordingly the 14% figure probably represents somewhere near the greatest benefit derived by the commissariat from this money saving device.

The growth of commissariat indebtedness, insignificant in the first year or so³¹ but accelerating to an alarming extent between the spring of 1811 and the end of 1812, may be observed by the steadily increasing prominence of a species of security generally referred to as a commissariat bill but

31. For example the debts passed on from Murray to Kennedy on the 10th June 1810 totalled £350,583 7/1d against which the military chest contained £301,975 3/1d, leaving a net debt of only £48,608 4/-.

which, to avoid confusion with the other varieties of bill with which this chapter deals, I shall describe henceforward as a draft. In a letter to Stuart Wellington described the origin of these pieces of paper. "I issued a proclamation³², requiring all those who furnished supplies to the army to demand payment for them within one month after the period at which the supplies had been furnished and I promised that they should be paid, if possible, in ready money; or if not possible, that the Commissary who had received the supplies should be directed to give a bill for their amount on the Commissary General"³³. The purpose of this order was to regularise the system of giving receipts, preventing various abuses whereby, from the receipts being incorrectly made out, great difficulty had arisen verifying claims for payment and injustice had been done to some whose demands had been inadequately certified and were no longer provable when presented for remuneration. Under the new system all holders of receipts who could not be paid promptly were given a draft which was simply intended to be an irrefutable proof of their entitlement to the money and of which they were to take advantage when the commissariat were ultimately able to pay. Since however the drafts bore on their face the sum of money for which they constituted a claim it is not surprising to discover that they were negotiated, against the commissariat's intention, and so came into circulation at a discount which grew in proportion as the normal delay in repayment was extended by the department's increasing shortage of funds³⁴. A further proclamation by Wellington in May 1812 directed commissaries to give drafts on the spot to the value of commodities received if money was not available³⁵. The only effect of this change of system was to increase the quantity of drafts upon which floated what was in effect a loan by means of which the commissariat covered the difference between its income and its expenditure³⁶.

32. Wellington says this proclamation appeared in 1809. He certainly issued an order to the above effect on the 4th January 1810 as various references testify. The order can be found in B.M. Add Mss 49481 f 132. Perhaps his memory misled him or else an earlier order to a similar effect has not been preserved.

33. Despatches IX p 80, Wellington to Stuart, 22nd April 1812.

34. The discount rate from its early days at only 2-3% grew to as much as 25% at the height of the money shortage of 1812 and settled back to about 2 1/2% in 1813.

35. B.M. Add Mss 57377, Bisset to Herries, 2nd May 1812.

36. I was tempted to describe this practice as obtaining a forced loan without interest. Since however the suppliers were sometimes at liberty to decline to supply, the adjective 'forced' would be exaggerated. Furthermore, since the loan was made originally not in money but in goods for which there were no fixed prices, the absence of interest was often compensated for by the ability of the supplier to charge an unduly high price, so the bare word 'loan' seems the most fair, though covering a multitude of peculiarities.

It was not the existence but the negotiability of the drafts that caused terrible embarrassment to the commissariat as the war proceeded and was the cause of the dangerous crisis in financial operations that developed during 1812 and which would if not calmly handled have prevented the campaign of 1813 ever being undertaken. Kennedy on several occasions pointed out that the drafts were never intended to be transferable, but obtained no sympathy from the Treasury. "These latter (drafts) are upon the face of them, to all Intents and Purposes negotiable instruments ... all of them to the order of the individual in whose favour they are drawn"³⁷. The difficulty arose because the drafts, expressed in Portuguese or Spanish currency, were sold at a discount by the owners usually country people or small contractors who could not afford to wait for their money as long as the commissariat insolvency required and for whom in any case a journey to Lisbon or to army headquarters, the only two spots where payment could be made, was often an impossibility. The purchaser could then take the draft and obtain a bill for its face value at Lisbon, thus in effect buying sterling via the medium of the depreciated draft at a cheaper rate than that possible on the open market³⁸. Not unnaturally holders of speculative money in Portugal took advantage of the existence of two exchange rates by sending agents into the hinterland and buying up all the drafts they could in the army's wake and then presenting them for payment by bills at Lisbon. The result was that the money making operations of the department at Lisbon were increasingly unsuccessful because the exchange rate offered was hopelessly uncompetitive. Some amelioration of this effect was achieved by Wellington's policy, practised since the Oporto campaign of 1809, of paying last those holders of drafts who had purchased them from the original recipients. This meant that a small discount on drafts produced little attention among speculators since it would be cancelled by the opportunity cost of holding illiquid assets for six months or more awaiting payment. As the discount grew these objections no longer applied in such force and

37. P.R.O. W.O. 57/5. Wharton to Herries, 13th January 1813.

38. For example a draft for 1,000 milreis is bought at a discount of 20%. It cost to the purchaser is thus 800 milreis metal equal to (at 25% discount on paper) 914 milreis currency. For it he receives a bill for 1,143 milreis currency at 70d each which makes £333 6/8d. Since this bill has only really cost him 914 milreis currency he has actually obtained 87½d per milrei, the increment of 25% corresponding to the original discount of 20%.

by the end of 1811 the situation was already beginning to cause alarm in Portugal.

The normal recourse when the bills offered for sale proved an insufficiently attractive proposition to tempt merchants to buy would have been to raise the exchange rate, but under the peculiar conditions the Commissary-General found himself this would only have had the effect of increasing the profit to be made exchanging drafts for bills. On the other hand without worsening the exchange it would not be possible to attract money to Lisbon from other financial centres. Kennedy's answer to the problem and Bisset's after him was to institute a second, unofficial, exchange rate which was that offered in a succession of private arrangements to a firm called Brown and Reid who contracted to deliver specific sums to Lisbon for which they were to be given bills on England. The first such arrangement was agreed in November 1811; Brown and Reid were to provide 400,000 dollars at 67d each³⁹. Early the following year Bisset continued the new policy and made two further contracts for a total of 1,000,000 dollars, the price having risen to 68d. Not surprisingly the Treasury were immediately alarmed by this practice. Why was the Commissary-General going to so much trouble to arrange for the delivery of money at a price higher than that which he was prepared to pay in the market? "The terms of this bargain appear ... to be extravagant" wrote Harrison⁴⁰. A misleading circumstance was that the system of private bargains had been brought to the Treasury's notice back in 1810 when Commissary-General Burgmann, head of the Mediterranean department in Sicily, had entered into several. His motive for this step appears to have been a fear of publicising his pressing need for money leading to his preferring to pay a little more now privately, than ultimately to pay the sort of prices he feared the merchant community would extort if he approached the market publicly. Naturally, as the Treasury foresaw at the time, the result of his operations was to drive money off the open market entirely and to force him into complete dependence upon specie contractors who accordingly charged extortionate prices⁴¹. The first reaction of the Commissary in Chief was

39. The official exchange rate valued the dollar at 64d at the end of 1811.

40. P.R.O. W.O. 57/4. Harrison to Herries, 18th December 1811.

41. And incidentally could afford to pay high prices in the Peninsular markets, thus reducing the funds open to other departments using open market operations. The prices Burgmann had to pay were truly enormously inflated; as much as 75d in 1812.

therefore to suppose that Kennedy and Bisset had erred in judgement as had Burgmann previously, and Herries explained carefully to the Commissary-General how, at the price he offered them, Brown and Reid could buy in the Lisbon market in order to sell to him. "The repetition of the offer on the part of those gentlemen tends very much in my opinion to confirm the conjecture ... stated"⁴² Herries added, in self-congratulatory vein, upon learning of Bisset's second contract.

When the home authorities learned more about the situation, the tone of the letters arriving in Portugal became immediately placatory. Herries seems to have realised the difficulty sooner than his Treasury colleagues who ordered him to send Bisset, upon the occasion of his first contract, copies of their letters to Kennedy and Burgmann upon the subject although neither were relevant to the Peninsular situation. Herries sent the letters as ordered, adding in his covering note "altho I am aware that there is a great dissimilarity between the two cases"⁴³. Shortly afterwards the Treasury appear also to have seen the problem for Bisset was informed that no blame or discredit was attached to him over the transactions and that their Lordships recognised laying down fixed rules at such a distance from the events to be impossible. While they maintained their opinion that specie contracts were a most undesirable resort the Treasury did not intend to issue any orders upon the subject and left the decisions to the judgement of the men on the spot. In return Wellington and Bisset quite agreed that contracts for specie were undesirable but asserted that there had been no alternative. The contrast between these standpoints does not seem to justify the ill-feeling aroused by the issue at the time nor does it support the theory of an uncooperative attitude in London⁴⁴. The Treasury, thoroughly in the right over their criticisms of Burgmann, retracted their similar criticism of Bisset upon the whole case being made clear to them, and although not convinced that no better means of financing could be found bore with silent dignity the news of Bisset's third contract in June⁴⁵.

42. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132. Herries to Bisset, 3rd April 1812.

43. Ibid. Herries to Bisset, 13th April 1812.

44. For the ill-feeling see Wellington's letter to Herries in justification of the specie contracts. B.M. Add Mss 57368, Wellington to Herries, 9th June 1812.

45. This time for 68 $\frac{3}{4}$ d but the extra $\frac{3}{4}$ d does not represent the growing power of the supplier only the increase in the official rate for metal between February and June. B.M. Add Mss 38363 f 53 Statement of the rate of exchange.

The Commissary-General too was justified in his claim that he entered into contracts only when necessary and he certainly never placed all his dependence on this method since he frequently turned down offers of lump sums in the course of the year.

The steady invasion of the Lisbon money market by depreciated drafts and the growing expense of the war created a cash shortage in 1812 which the specie contracts certainly could not fill. The army's debt grew from 3,750,000 dollars in January to 11,000,000 dollars in the autumn of which 5,000,000 dollars' worth was assigned upon drafts. Still very little money could be sent from England. In reply to repeated demands from Portugal⁴⁶ Herries did his best to explain the government's difficulties. Most of the country's internal circulation was carried on by means of bank notes or tokens and if the Bank of England were to accumulate coin without regard to price a disastrous depreciation of this paper and consequent credit crisis would ensue⁴⁷. The recent report of the bullion committee amply proved the fragile nature of commercial confidence in England. Wellington, grasping for expedients in the face of difficulties, made an effort to pass Bank of England notes as cash in Portugal but the suggestion was not enthusiastically greeted by the merchants. This was fortunate as such a practice could only have had the effect of instituting yet a third rate of exchange against sterling to the great detriment of British credit. Some help however the Treasury could give in raising money abroad. The early part of 1812 saw the Gibraltar market established as a resource for the supply of Portugal only (once the garrison's needs had been met) and the Admiralty were asked to provide vessels regularly to transport the money thence to Lisbon. The business side of the undertaking was handled by Sampaio and the sums realised in this way certainly exceeded those obtained under the system of private bargains⁴⁸.

The desire to shift the weight of the commissariat's financial operations away from the Lisbon money market where they were carried on under such

46. About £450,000 went in 1811. Altogether in 1812 about £600,000 was sent but almost all in the last four months of the year.

47. Officers joining the army found shortage of ready money to take with them a problem and paid high prices for it. For example William Graham bought dollars at Cork for 6/3d towards the end of 1812. Graham op. cit. p 2.

48. The only figures I have discovered covering this trade show that between the 7th July and the 10th October 2,800,000 dollars arrived at Lisbon from Gibraltar under Sampaio's arrangement. P.R.O. W.O. 57/40. For the same trade in 1813 see W.O. 77/1.

disadvantageous circumstances can be seen reflected in two further measures of late 1812, the appointment of Bisset to command the Gibraltar commissariat and to enjoy a general supervision of all money raising in the Mediterranean, and the employment of Messrs Staniforth and Blunt as mercantile agents to collect specie "in aid of the Foreign and Continental Military Expenditure"⁴⁹, also in the Mediterranean region. These confusing sounding arrangements were clarified for Kennedy's benefit by a letter from Herries of the 27th October, stating that Bisset at Gibraltar was to be under Kennedy's orders and that the mercantile agents were ordered to avoid the Gibraltar market as far as possible and at all times to take second place there behind Kennedy's own operations. More than just the difficulties at Lisbon lay behind these measures which were also greatly inspired by the muddle Burgmann had made of money raising in Sicily and the consequent complaints of his drawing cash away from the Peninsula by his high prices. Bisset's real role at Gibraltar, apart from keeping the garrison fed, was to extend the control of the Peninsular Commissary-General and stem future money drains to the eastward, while the mercantile agency was seen not as a desideratum but as a last resort to handle Burgmann's job for him. "The Commission given to Messrs Staniforth & Co has only been resorted to after the most earnest, persevering, but ineffectual endeavours by the .. Treasury .. to rescue the money negotiations from the control of a set of speculators who had conspired to thwart (Burgmann)"⁵⁰. While admitting the force of these reasons it may be argued that the arrangement only partly achieved the real goal, which was surely the unifying of all the Mediterranean and Peninsular financial operations under a single direction. This step however would have necessitated the separating of the financial and operational duties of the Peninsular Commissary-General as it was impossible that one man should run the whole business of the army's supplies and such a great financial concern⁵¹. Both Herries and Bisset supported the idea of such

49. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134 Herries to Kennedy, 16th October 1812. Staniforth subsequently declined the agency and Blunt exercised it alone for a while through the medium of a Mr Goodchild. Ibid, Herries to Kennedy, 4th November 1812.

50. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134. Herries to Kennedy, 27th October 1812.

51. An undated memorandum which appears to belong to the year 1811 concerns setting up a financial commission to deal with money raising in Portugal, which body would have three members, one of them Charles Stuart, and would be prepared to take emergency measures in the event of the failure of regular operations. The idea behind this was that the stores and money responsibility in Portugal alone was too much for one man even before there was any question of bringing the Mediterranean command too under consideration. Nothing appears to have come of this idea. B.M. Add Mss 57393 f 15.

a separation but the loss of control over financial ~~concerns~~ was not found satisfactory to Kennedy or Wellington. Altogether Vansittart spoke with some justice when he commenced a memorandum in September with the thought that, taking into account the orders given to the various commissaries, the mercantile agents employed to assist them, the efforts made to raise money at home, "it does not seem possible that this government can take any further steps for the support of our armies in the Peninsular (sic)"⁵².

Offering new securities in the attempt to raise a loan in the interior of Spain had been considered, but the idea proved unworkable after an exchange of opinions between London and headquarters. The scheme was to offer interest bearing certificates in return for dollars. Since repayment was not envisaged until after the war when the exchange should have fallen, the dollar, if repaid in sterling, was to be valued at five shillings and the whole operation could be financed by government purchases in the English stock market, very low in early 1812, the capital appreciation upon which investment it was hoped would finance both the repayment of the loan and its half-yearly interest payments. As a long term investment such a loan might have proved attractive to Spanish money holders, particularly since it carried a built in element of currency speculation fixing as it did the parity of five shillings to the dollar, yet in a manner whereby the investor could not lose since it was at his option to receive payment of interest and principal in dollars or sterling⁵³. Wellington however felt that the certificates were useless without a specified term after which repayment was possible. He suggested two years as a sensible period, but agreed that if repayment was undertaken before the exchange should have fallen it would be impossible to use bills to meet the demands. Herries advised Lord Liverpool against guaranteeing any fixed expiry date for the certificates, pointing out that failure to pay in the Peninsula was inevitable if a large number of certificate holders all presented their paper at the earliest possible opportunity and that the ensuing loss of credit would be too damaging to be risked. Thus, although Wellington was authorised to raise a loan upon the open-ended certificates, he issued none in the event and the scheme came to nothing. It is hard to see in any case how the certificates could have

52. B.M. Add Mss 31236. Memorandum on financial resources, 2nd September 1812.

53. B.M. Add Mss 57393. Memoranda of 23rd and 27th March 1812.

competed against drafts as speculative instruments, to say nothing of the danger that they might also have become subject to a discount⁵⁴. As Stuart observed; "The immense outstanding claims which the Commissariat are unable to answer with any degree of regularity... is... decisive against the circulation of new paper in the shape of Exchequer Bills, a proposition discussed and rejected two years ago⁵⁵ for the same reasons when the pressure on that Department did not by any means approach the difficulties of the present moment"⁵⁶. It was the existence of the drafts, their transferability and depreciation that was at the root of all the difficulties over money raising in the Peninsula during 1812.

Before the close of the 1812 campaign the sums of money being received into the military chest from the sale of Treasury bills had dwindled to very little and the money crisis had grown serious. By September the army's pay was six months in arrears, with bat and forage money owing for a much longer period, the commissariat department was owed for ten months and the muleteers for fifteen⁵⁷. Greater than any of these debts however was the tale of unpaid drafts, to a total of nearly 5,000,000 dollars. The money to hand was only sufficient to pay the arrears of the hospitals and the Douro boatmen, leaving hardly any surplus to apply to the indebtedness of the other services. Under these circumstances it was clearly of vital importance that new measures be implemented to draw money out of the Lisbon market. The first step to this end appears to be a rare example of independent initiative from Commissary-General Dalrymple, in charge of the commissariat between Bisset falling sick at the end of August and Kennedy's return to headquarters a month later. On September 7th Dalrymple wrote to Ogilvie about an arrangement to buy supplies with bills on England that, "This is a system of payment which I have lately discontinued considering the same prejudicial to the raising of specie at Lisbon"⁵⁸. Prejudicial it certainly was that suppliers should be enabled to obtain bills at a cheap rate either

54. This, granted the repayment in England provision, might have created yet another exchange rate.

55. Drummond's 'exchequer actions' idea.

56. B.M. Add Mss 31236. Stuart to Wellington, 17th June 1812.

57. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41. Kennedy to Herries, 14th February 1813 contains these figures which are of course approximate as regards the muleteers who were not all paid up to the same time.

58. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 22080, f 135. Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 7th September 1812.

by virtue of the discount on their drafts or by means of their initial high prices, and the result of such a system was that, bills being either at first or at second hand obtainable more cheaply than the commissariat had them on offer, little money accrued to the department. Dalrymple's measure, as the Treasury were quick to observe, paved the way for a raising of the exchange, not hitherto practical as we saw in the case of private bargains. "Their Lordships.." wrote Herries on the 7th October, "will highly approve of your exertions to ameliorate the prospect of our pecuniary resources & support the credit & stability of the Military Chest.

The continued existence of a floating debt assigned upon Bills to be drawn at Lisbon upon the Treasury at home is so obviously disadvantageous to the credit & prompt negotiation of those Bills for the purchase of specie that .. their Lordships cannot be other than satisfied.. that the Practice of making Payment in the Interior in that manner can in future be avoided"⁵⁹.

Much to the surprise of the Commissary in Chief no news of any rise in the exchange rate reached London, only complaints from merchants whose drafts were no longer being paid. The sums of money raised at Lisbon in September and early October remained exiguous⁶⁰. Early in October, by Kennedy's account, a suggestion was made to him by some holders of drafts at Lisbon that they might be given bills in payment if they were prepared to hand in a quantity of specie equal to the value of the drafts in exchange for a further bill. Kennedy agreed to this proposal and in the second week of the month paid off about £50,000 worth of debt while raising an equal quantity of cash in this way. This practice rapidly became regular, and was reported as such to the Treasury in a letter of the 2nd December. Another letter of the same date reported the increase of the exchange to 72d at Lisbon. Even the normally impassive Mr Archer, clerk to the Commissary in Chief⁶¹, was moved to write on the reverse of the letter "I am surprised that this has not been done sooner" prefiguring Herries' remark in his reply "I am surprised this measure had not been resorted to at an earlier period"⁶². The 'half and half' system however did not receive the same approbation although it was a while before its mode

59. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134. Herries to Kennedy, 7th October 1812.

60. About £90,000 in the five weeks following September 1st, approximately 8% of expenditure in that time.

61. Mr Archer was also good friend of Bisset therefore probably no admirer of Kennedy.

62. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 4th January 1813.

of operation was properly understood in England. This was partly because of an ambiguity in Kennedy's letter when he spoke of the "current rates of exchange and discount". "Is the 'current rate of discount' to be considered as that which is current on Commissariat Bills?"⁶³ inquired Herries, appalled at the thought of the department thus contributing to the depreciation of its own paper. In the event it proved that Kennedy had meant simply that the 'agio' or premium for an all metal payment was to be allowed to the merchant on the 'half and half' transactions⁶⁴. Fortescue wrote of the 'half and half' system that "it was too much for the official mind"⁶⁵. Certainly the Treasury were instinctively suspicious of the scheme even before it had been fully explained to them and wrote to Kennedy on the 16th January asking why new measures had been necessary. The reply took the form of a demonstration of commissariat insolvency over the past two years coupled with an exposition of the number of debts from the past campaign he had been able to eliminate thanks to the adoption of the new money raising method. In conclusion he stated the impossibility of making do any longer with the old system of selling bills, but the Treasury, unimpressed, ordered that the 'half and half' transactions should cease. This order was indignantly countermanded by Wellington who wrote that "at this promising moment I cannot see the affairs of the country fail for want of money"⁶⁶, and the Treasury, although not at all revising their opinion upon the transactions thereafter allowed the practice to continue until the beginning of the following year⁶⁷.

The issue was most important because of the undoubted truth of Kennedy's assertion that the service could no longer be carried on under the system

63. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134 Herries to Kennedy, 4th January 1813.

64. Kennedy used the word 'discount' loosely since the agio in question was derived from the rate of discount on paper. Drafts were treated as specie since they had for the most part been issued to creditors who would not have accepted a currency payment or indeed in Spain where the Portuguese paper was not current

65. Fortescue R.A.S.C. vol I p 101. Fortescue does state that he "cannot presume to say" which party was in the right in the 'half and half' dispute but he implies that the Treasury behaved weakly in the face of complaints from the merchants. See also Fortescue's History vol IX pp 92-4.

66. Despatches X p 312. Wellington to Bathurst, 21st April 1813.

67. I have not seen the letter by which the system was finally halted but it appears from Kennedy's letter to Herries of the 5th May 1814 that the 'half and half' transactions ceased after the 22nd January 1814. P.R.O. W.O. 57/44.

prevailing in the summer of 1812. Drafts could not be circulated indefinitely without their credit falling so low that the inhabitants would stop accepting them altogether leaving the army a blunt choice between forcible requisition or starvation if it wished to operate away from the coast. The advance of 1813 could not have been conducted upon these terms any more than it could have taken place without the services of the muleteers, many of whom would have deserted had they not been paid for 1812 before commencing the hard work of 1813. Viewed in this light the Treasury's attempt to prohibit the new system appears positively mischievous. Their defence rests upon two grounds; firstly that they did point out one undoubted drawback to the 'half and half' scheme, and secondly that they were not rejecting it without having in mind an alternative solution to the army's difficulties. The drawback was that by adopting this system Kennedy obliged any merchant wishing to obtain bills other than at the uncompetitive market rate to buy up commissariat paper, aggravating thereby the central problem⁶⁸. Furthermore the more uncompetitive the market rate grew, the more it was in the interests of the money holders further to depreciate the drafts. The Treasury therefore rightly observed that the 'half and half' system did not tend to overcome the root cause of the difficulty. Their alternative remedy was of great simplicity at first sight. As we have seen, now that drafts were no longer redeemable directly for bills there was no longer any objection to raising the rate of exchange offered, and this solution was what Herries propounded in a memorandum of 5th May 1813. Before penning this memorandum the Commissary in Chief had been in receipt of a letter⁶⁹ setting out in ill-expressed, complicated but accurate calculations the profit to speculators that resulted from the 'half and half' system and also the adverse fluctuations in the exchange rate that it necessarily provoked⁷⁰. The writer concluded his analysis with the opinion that the issue of bills should be divorced entirely from the payment of drafts. This idea Herries took up in the memorandum emphasising the need to raise the exchange, which should in any case have been done in the autumn, in order to bring the money forward.

68. There was another point also made in objection to the system, namely that it was unjust to oblige creditors to provide more money before their debts were paid off. True though this was in principle, Wellington disposed of it easily by showing that knowledge of the system's existence had not in any way deterred the speculators from continuing to buy up drafts.

69. Anonymous in the Herries papers. Add Mss 57415 Dated Lisbon 13th March 1813 and addressed to William Burn 'of this city'. The writer appears from the internal evidence to have been Portuguese.

70. His calculations, based on accurate figures as far as I can see despite Wellington's scepticism (see the letter to Bathurst, Despatches X p 312 v.s.), show that the department were in effect offering nearly 80d per milrea currency in each 'half and half' transaction and that the profit to the speculator in each deal was $2\frac{1}{4}\%$.

He wrote of the 'half and half' system that "It cannot be imagined that the specie was created by this measure", and accordingly that the same money must be available to be obtained by other means.

Whether or not the policy of a higher exchange rate, coupled with an attempt to pay the drafts as close to the army as possible in order to reduce their discount in the interior (plainly the main regulating factor over their discount at Lisbon) would have enabled Kennedy to pay his debts and support the operations of 1813 is not known because it was not tried. The evidence of early 1814 when the 'half and half' system was abolished at the Treasury's insistence is inconclusive; more specie was certainly raised from the sale of bills after the abolition than had been before but whether this increase, appropriated to the early payment of drafts near the campaigning area, would have sufficed to keep down the discount which the cessation of payment by bills at Lisbon would otherwise have tended to increase remains impossible to say. Kennedy, upon comparison of the figures for the last two months of the 'half and half' system with those for the two months following, was dissatisfied at the change as, although more money was received into the chest in the second period⁷¹, the debt grew considerably, while previously it had been slightly declining. It is probable that Ogilvie's mission in late 1813 to pay debts in the immediate rear of the army represents Kennedy's awareness of the need to keep the discount down locally but unfortunately there are no reliable figures for the discount on drafts by the end of the year so any effect this measure may have had cannot be observed. It would accordingly be dangerous to castigate Kennedy and Wellington for their stubborn adherence to such a tortuous and commercially discreditable system, since despite all the argument it provoked it was successful in achieving the important object of its adoption, namely the paying of the most pressing debts of 1812 and the financing of the campaigns of 1813, while any rival scheme might have proved less lucrative. Although Wellington blamed the merchant interest for putting pressure on the Treasury, the most important ammunition against the 'half and half' system appears to have been produced by the Commissary in Chief, Kennedy's direct superior. Yet when in Bisset's time the private bargains for specie produced a disagreement between London and headquarters, Herries had adopted a mediating role and the whole case

71. £434,843 15/1d against £323,918 14/11d.

had been smoothed over. The mutual dislike of Herries and Kennedy may have contributed to the violence of the later disagreement and its eventual outcome against the Commissary-General's wishes.

Another factor in the improvement of the army's financial situation from the nadir of 1812 was the increase in shipments of money from England, starting on the 17th November 1812 with the arrival at Lisbon of H.M.S. 'Stag' bringing £100,000 in guineas, the first of several consignments of gold. Great care was taken over the first guinea shipment⁷², as its legal justification rested upon a very dubious loophole. Indeed Herries in his memoir flatly states (with pride!) that the export was against the law. Soon however the weakening of Napoleon's grip upon Germany, consequent upon his disaster in Russia, gave Britain access again to many European markets and greatly eased the difficulty of finding specie. Herries himself directed operations in Europe, through the agency of Nathan Rothschild, and raised funds sufficient to meet the British subsidy obligations to all the allied powers and to promise in addition £100,000 per month to the Peninsular army, not of course nearly sufficient to meet its expenses but a great deal more than had been possible before. In fact the reality exceeded the promise, for shipments between the 19th November 1812 and the 15th July 1813⁷³ totalled about £1,150,000 all in gold. Even in this last period of the war however, when money was at its easiest, the main support of the Peninsular army was its credit and the security of British Treasury bills just as the case had been from 1809 onwards, and to the very end of the war the commissariat were to be plagued by the constant lack of ready money.

This war-long dependence on credit arose from several circumstances for some of which, like the influence of international affairs upon the British economy, the commissariat was not responsible. However organisational inefficiencies contributed to aggravate the situation. The dual responsibility of the commissariat both to the Commissary in Chief and to the Commander of the Forces led to divisions in which the Commissary-General and the Commissary in Chief were more often on opposite sides than co-operating as they should

72. It was to be transported directly to headquarters immediately upon landing and was to be spent only as personally directed by Wellington.

73. The last date on which specie was sent to Lisbon rather than to the north coast of Spain. There was also received at Lisbon in this period about £500,000 from Gibraltar and £280,000 from Cadiz, making nearly £2,000,000 in all over eight months, probably about a quarter of the army's expenditure.

have been in support of Wellington's plans. The whole responsibility of the financial, stores and accounts sides of commissariat business was, in a theatre as extensive as the Peninsula, too great for one man, and since neither Kennedy nor Bisset were expert in financial matters the money raising side of their business was inevitably treated superficially by successive expedients. Faulty economic thinking seems often to have guided local commissariat policy, in particular the idea that their great demand for money alone would be a sufficient magnet for specie, such that money circulating in the market would eventually be attracted at their price simply because there was nowhere else for it to go.⁷⁴ They neglected the fact that the financial opportunities of the merchants were international and included not only Lisbon and the Mediterranean but also North America, Britain and Russia and that only a small proportion of the specie could be tied down in one market. Had it proved feasible to centralise fund raising operations in the Mediterranean and Peninsular markets it would have been much easier to operate on this principle, but such a measure was hindered as we have seen by the impossibility of still further extending the powers of the Peninsular Commissary-General and by the financial entanglements of the Mediterranean commissariat from 1810 onwards. Any central collecting agency, if the sole money gatherer for the whole area, would have begun life as much at the mercy of the merchants as Commissary-General Burgmann had become.

If we grant that the money raising was conducted less efficiently in Portugal than it might have been, it remains true that it was energetically pursued and proved far from unsuccessful. As Herries wrote in May 1812 the commissariat's "operations have been carried on to an extent which has vastly exceeded the point which had been considered by the best judgements (particularly Ld Wellington's) as the utmost limit to which they could possibly be taken"⁷⁵. The army's debt did not begin to grow serious until operations out of Portugal were undertaken, that is to say until 1811, a year which saw two abortive sieges of Badajoz and the blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo.⁷⁶ The increase in transport

74. See B.M. Add Mss 31236 Macdonnel to Pidon, 24th July 1812. "Where (sic) it not that you had few competitors in the negotiation you could raise little at 70d." "I am aware that one maxim is sedulously impressed upon your ear.. namely that let your Department fix the exchanges on the price of silver where it pleases your supplies will still be the same. To a certain extent you may go but not beyond".

75. B.M. Add Mss 57393 f 46. Observations on a proposed arrangement for increasing our means in the Peninsula, May 1812.

76. The Talavera campaign of 1809 had of course taken the troops far from Portugal but they were only operating at a distance from the border for those two months in the whole period between April 1809 and March 1811.

and supplies expenditure brought about by the increasing military success of the army could not be afforded in cash and thus the successful campaigns of 1812 and 1813 were only made possible by the credit attached to commissariat drafts. Whence derived this credit? Partly from the established and justified reputation of the department for paying its debts, although very slowly, but this alone would not have been sufficient to establish credit in the eyes of someone who, like the usual original recipients of drafts, could not afford to wait months for payment⁷⁷. To the much maligned merchants who bought these debts in the countryside must go a part of the credit, for their purchases, albeit at a discount, made it practical for a peasant to accept payment in paper, and had such payments not been acceptable the offensive operations could not have been carried out. Wellington always abused the purchasers of debts and the commissariat attitude towards traders in general was one of suspicion⁷⁸, but without the men whose commerce provided the accumulation of money garnered by the commissariat at Lisbon, Cadiz and Gibraltar, and whose eye for a profit turned even commissariat paper into a speculative proposition, where would the department have looked for cash or for credit? It is naturally true that the merchants were in pursuit of profit before any military interest and true too that this profit was generally at the department's expense. Nonetheless it seems a small price to pay for the service afforded - nothing less than the very financial survival of the British army in the Peninsula; a minor triumph of laissez faire economics.

77. Ward indeed states that the debt holders had sometimes to wait two years for their money. Op. cit. p 93.

78. "Sharks, called British merchants.." Wellington to Bathurst, 21st April 1813, already cited. Compare the following statement by Macdonnel, who as party to the Malta contracts would certainly have been included in the above category; "I am .. more .. interested in the re-conquest of Spain than in the success of any single mercantile operation... Deplorable indeed would it be if .. a narrow system of Finance should by leaving him destitute of money unnerve Lord Wellington's aim". Add Mss 31236. Macdonnel to Stuart, 24th September 1812.

CHAPTER V : The Organisation of Transport 1809-14.

It is intended to examine the Peninsular transport system in two sections, one dealing with the methods used to bring provisions forward to where they would be collected for the military formations, and the other considering the means of conveyance attached to the units to enable them to make this collection. Almost all transport between the rear depots and those in front whether of provisions imported for army use or bought in the Lisbon market began by water as this was the quickest way of carrying large quantities over any distance. This might involve shipping the supplies in question to the port at the mouth of the river up which they would travel, and suitable transports were generally retained on the coast for this purpose. Thus when in the winter of 1812 the Commissioners of Victualling refused to risk sending their own transports into Figueira or Oporto Herries pointed out "that there are now at Lisbon several transports which from their draft of Water are well adapted to the purpose of conveying such quantities of the Rum as may be req'd"¹. From the ports the supplies proceeded up river in smaller craft as far as the navigability of the river permitted. The boats used appear to have been owned by local people and requisitioned for army use in the same manner as will be considered later respecting carts, since the regulations of 1811 for registering and making available means of transport applied equally and in similar manner to both carts and boats. That the Portuguese local officials were the intermediaries between the commissariat and the owners in the matter of boats as well as carts may be seen from the payment authorised in 1815 to Sr Botelho, described as 'a magistrate', for "assisting in the management of the Land and Water Transport of the Commt at Lisbon"², and altogether it appears that the two services were organised upon a similar system.

The Tagus was the first stage for provisions on their way to the troops in southern Portugal. Although some goods proceeded from Abrantes to the northern sector this must have been a rare event since the distance from Abrantes to Guarda by the direct route was twenty six leagues, nearly twice

1. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132, Herries to Bisset, 19th February 1812.

2. Ibid 58/133, Herries to Kennedy, 14th October 1815. The same gentleman is also spelt Batalho and Botelho in the same letter.

as far^{as} from the up-river depots on the Douro and Mondego³. Towards the end of 1809 it was suggested that a shorter route might take supplies by sea from Lisbon round Cape Espichel into the river Sado as far as Alcacer do Sal, which although on the map looking no closer to the army at Badajoz than was Abrantes, was five leagues closer by road. An experimental cargo of oats went by this route late in 1809, and it was later to be followed by the siege artillery in transit between Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. The departure of the main army to the north however almost immediately after the oats shipment relieved the pressure on transport in the southern sector as well as shifting the centre of gravity of the forces deployed in the south from Badajoz to Portalegre, thus nullifying the saving in distance of the route via Alcacer do Sal. Higher than Abrantes it proved impossible to ship supplies in any quantity. This was demonstrated by the experience of Captain Cleves of the Royal Artillery who, although successfully bringing ammunition by boat as far up-river as Vila Velha, complained that "had I known the difficulty of the navigation I never should have undertaken the business. I lost one boat entirely and risked many times to lose the whole"⁴. The lower river too was not without its hazards, and when the water was particularly high no stores could pass the mouth of the Zezere but in general Abrantes may be taken as the point of transition from water to land carriage for supplies proceeding to forces in the southern sector.

Provisions for the troops in Beira might use either the Mondego or the Douro. The former river was generally navigable to Foz Dao, or to Raiva in the dry season, although high water might interdict this supply also and prevent the boats travelling higher than Coimbra. The Douro, subject also to intermittent spells of inclement weather in winter which might render the journey impossible,⁵ could be sailed as high as San Joao da Pesqueira. For the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo a new depot was established at Barca D'Alva

3. Distances from Sebastian de Minano, Diccionario Geografico-Estadistico de Espana y Portugal, Madrid 1826. See Vol II p 292. The league cannot be trusted as a precise measurement but probably equals about four miles. The direct road referred to above was rendered impassable in 1810 as part of Wellington's defensive preparations and probably not repaired until after the war: the resulting detour through Castello Branco added four leagues further to the journey.

4. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 22080. Cleves to Ogilvie, 13th July 1809.

5. See N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17899. Lavers to Ogilvie, 26th November 1812. "Nothing could be got up the river, it being so very high and rapid". See also Daniel p 68 for problems in 1811.

near the confluence with the Douro of the Agueda and the Yeltes, after engineering work had improved the navigation to permit of the boats reaching so high. This advanced depot, although helpful for the siege and later for the opening weeks of the main campaign of 1812, was of seasonal usefulness, not this time on account of occasional high water in winter but because of invariable low water in summer. After July 1812 it appears to have played no further part in supplying the army in Spain and not until the middle of November could it be restocked, too late to provide support for the closing stages of the campaign⁶. Even when Barca D'Alva was not in use the Douro provided a closer approach to the Spanish border than did the Mondego yet cannot be said to have been the busier of the two routes. This was partly because it was desirable to spread the load between the two waterways, not so much to save water transport as to overcome the shortage of carts felt on the land stage of both routes, but also because any retreat would tend to lead the allied army back upon Lisbon and away from the Douro which could not therefore safely be made the major line of supply. Indeed when Wellington redistributed the army in 1810 with an ultimate retreat very much in mind, the Mondego depots were made the more important repositories. In January 1810 three bread rations were held on the Douro to every two on the Mondego but by March there were three on the Mondego to every one on the northern river. In succeeding years both rivers appear to have been fairly equally used and the dispersed quarters occupied by the forces at different times between April 1811 and May 1813 were evidently calculated with a view to drawing supplies from both.

When the army advanced to the Pyrenees its dependence upon coastal supplies became greater than before. In the summer of 1813 supplies both from other ports in the Peninsula and from the United Kingdom were shipped to Santander and forwarded thence to Bilbao or Passages as required. "Santander will be our great depot but Bilboa the point from and to which our transport will be employed"⁷, explained Kennedy in June. The success of the army in driving the French across the Pyrenees soon left Bilbao further in rear than had been expected and by the 8th July the commissariat was chartering vessels at Santander for the trip to Passages instead⁸. After the battle of the

6. The other drawback to Barca D'Alva as a depot for supplying forces in Spain was the poor quality of the road thence to Freixenada which was impassable for carts.

7. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16541, f 118. Kennedy to Ogilvie, 27th June 1813.

8. Ibid No 17916 f 149. Bilbao remained a depot after this, although many of the provisions accumulated there were forwarded to Passages which became the larger magazine.

Nivelle on November 10th the port of St Jean de Luz became available and succeeded Passages as the closest harbour to the army, while the same victory secured the course of the Nivelle and enabled the formation of an up-river depot at St Pée. The capacity of the harbours used soon became a problem - even in October Frazer noted "Our battering train ships are ordered out of Passages harbour, already much too full"⁹ - and accordingly other coastal magazines to which mules could be sent were established, at Renteria, Fuenterabia and a 'floating depot' at Socoa. Provisions nonetheless accumulated in the Spanish ports of Santander and Passages owing to various circumstances, the shortage of transport, the frequent bad weather of December and January and the refusal of the Victualling Board's hired vessels to wait for unloading or to be sent forward to other ports. At the end of the war Passages had acquired such a mountain of supplies that they were being thrown into the sea to make room for further arrivals¹⁰. While the war lasted this plenty had not been able to transfer itself to the forward depots which often during the winter found themselves embarrassed by the demands of the divisions.

Most of the transporting of supplies between the off-loading points on the rivers and the forward depots was done by the Portuguese bullock carts of which Schaumann wrote this well known description. "They consist of rough planks nailed onto a massive pole or shaft. At right angles to the shaft & under the planks 2 blocks of semi rounded wood were fixed, having a hole in the centre & through these holes the axle was fitted"¹¹. Not all of the transport vehicles were of this pattern of course. Mule cars, wider and more cumbersome than the ox wagons, were frequently encountered in the south and also 'quadrilhos' pulled by wild cattle which marched more slowly than their domesticated cousins¹². In the north some of the sturdiest cars were those owned by the wine companies along the Douro, though the influence of these bodies was so great that "the magistrates do everything in their power to protect them from any other duty"¹³.

9. Frazer p 307.

10. P.R.O. W.O. 57/42 Drake to Herries, 12th December 1813 and 57/6 Lushington to Herries, 27th May 1814.

11. Schaumann p 24. See also J Weller, Wellington in the Peninsula, 1962, facing page 128 for a picture of such a cart.

12. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17922 f. 38, Da Pinna to Ogilvie, 4th July 1809.

13. Ibid No 17936 f. 124. St Remy to Ogilvie, 12th September 1812.

Generalisations about cart transport therefore, while convenient, should not be supposed to imply perfect homogeneity among the vehicles. Nonetheless the carts of Schaumann's account may fairly be said greatly to have outnumbered the others in the supply of the army. While evidently of spartan design and tough construction, many of these carts were in bad repair and breakdowns were frequent. Wellington attributed this to overloading and issued an order in August 1809 that no cart was to carry more than 600 lbs of cargo¹⁴. This instruction, never rescinded though sometimes rather loosely interpreted as meaning six hundredweight, was perhaps useful in calling the fragility of some carts to the notice of those officers who were not familiar with their properties, but by depriving the commissaries of any power to exercise initiative caused sound carts to be underloaded while many of the weak ones broke just the same¹⁵. Mr Lees, employed in 1809 to procure transport for supplies at Estremoz, wrote that "it is asserted that so many cars break down because they are overloaded - which certainly is not absolutely the case - for great numbers break down in coming to load when they are empty"¹⁶.

The cause of cart breakages was in great part the deliberate neglect of their owners who did not want them taken for service. Two further factors contributed. First, whatever may have been the situation regarding overloading, it is clear that both the carts and the animals that pulled them were sometimes worked excessively hard and consequently rendered unserviceable. In the letter already quoted, Lees commented on a case where carts carrying regimental baggage had been obliged to travel six leagues in twenty four hours¹⁷, observing "this is certainly the way to knock up all the carriage on the road". The same Captain Cleves who travelled so perilously to Vila Velha by water proceeded in July from Castello Branco to Talavera with 122 carts and 280 bullocks embargoed on his behalf by Acting Assistant Commissary Downie. The owners only saw the return of four carts and sixteen bullocks "that were not fit for working"¹⁸, besides another forty two beasts they collected having been left behind on the road. By no means all of the

14. Supplementary Despatches VI. General Order of 20th August 1809.

15. For example, for a cart carrying a pipe of wine falling to bits on the road and destroying its cargo, see N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17974 Major to Ogilvie, July 1812.

16. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17907 f.110. Lees to Ogilvie, 8th October 1809.

17. This was nearly twice the daily distance permitted in the Portuguese Government's transport regulations. v.i.

18. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17893 f. 4.

missing carts can have broken down, many doubtless being stolen by the regiments of the army, but the incident makes the point that the draught animals as well as the fabric of the carts were vulnerable to long journeys, the mortality of bullocks under such circumstances having been considered already in the section of chapter III dealing with the meat supply. The second factor contributing towards damage to the carts was the poor state of the Portuguese roads, abused by every diarist who noticed them at all, and particularly difficult in hilly areas.¹⁹ Even the main routes appear to have been poor and the secondary roads were atrocious. Masséna, lacking information, had the misfortune to pick minor roads for his advance on Coimbra in 1810 and according to Pelet by the time the French reached Viseu from Almeida "we were obliged to make repairs on all the artillery waggons of the army corps since they were badly damaged by the poor roads"²⁰. Carts in the employ of the commissariat operating in the same area were subject to the same wear and tear.

It was originally the design of the Commissary-General to obtain transport by contractual agreements with the owners of carts and mules²¹. On the 27th May 1809 after Mr Downie had declined the appointment, Ogilvie 'reluctantly' accepted "exclusive superintendence and payment of all carts, Horses, Mules, oxen & boats employed or to be employed for the transport of stores and baggage for the service of the army"²². He found the voluntary principle fairly successful in the case of mules but a failure with regard to carts and quite early in the year it became necessary to resort to embargo and other means of compulsion. The disinclination of the inhabitants of Portugal to supply their carts, and more particularly their draught animals, for the service of the army was as marked in 1809 as it was to prove throughout the war, and desertion, often taking the oxen with them, by men pressed into the service was commonplace. "The different parties of Portuguese militia who were sent out to impress carts sent in twenty two last night but the drivers have all fled"²³, wrote Ogilvie on 30th June. Four days previously he had

19. Graham described the main road from Villafranca to Abrantes as 'terrible' and claimed that the branch at Punhete towards Tomar was worse! Morris, travelling on the same route, wrote "The roads are very indifferent that is called the principal road to Spain the worst of our by roads in England is better than some part of it". Graham pp 16/17 and N.A.M. Acc 7508 - 24.

20. Pelet op. cit. p 169.

21. "He (the Commissary-General) at the same time by no means wishes you to lose sight of the original intention of binding them (cart owners) by a voluntary agreement..." N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17926, Coffin to Ogilvie, 7th October 1809.

22. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17935 f. 70. 'Reluctantly' was Ogilvie's own word.

23. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17958 f. 68. Report by Ogilvie, 30th June 1809.

requisitioned the Juiz de Fora at Abrantes for twenty five drivers to replace some who had deserted²⁴, and the following month thirty cars carrying medical stores between Zarza la Mayor and Moraleja were abandoned by their owners who took the animals away with them²⁵. The need for carts while the army remained in Spain was so great, not enough mules being available to cover all the transport requirements, that force had often to be used both to impress carts and their drivers into the service and afterwards to retain them in it. Mr Cooper at Portalegre, finding the local authorities unhelpful, bypassed them and used soldiers to seize carts²⁶, but generally the magistrate's assistance was obtained, Mr Lees finding the Juiz of Montemor o Novo particularly zealous and helpful for burning carts broken down by the roadside as a deterrent to those who damaged their own property to avoid having it employed by the commissariat. Such carts as were obtained had often to be kept longer than expected because of the general shortage. Sixty five Portuguese carts carrying reserve ammunition for the 1st division could not be replaced at Castello Branco and were taken on (the fifty six that had survived the journey) into Spain contrary to orders²⁷. Tupper Carey later brought Spanish carts back to Elvas and, when ordered to return them to Badajoz, excused himself by asserting that the vehicles were all "wanting yokes and other necessary articles without which they cannot proceed"²⁸.

Not all the carts used by the army in 1809 were requisitioned or compelled to serve. A variety of hiring agreements were also concluded, a confusing variety from the point of view of commissariat sub-accountants. Henry Callow at Elvas complained that "their Guias²⁹ vary in price; some at 1200 @ 1000 @ 800; and some are paid the same working or not"³⁰. He might have added that some were paid at half rate when not working and others by weight per league travelled rather than daily³¹. Even at the most expensive rates however, carts remained far cheaper than mules as a means of transport,

24. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 22080 f. 14, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 26th June 1809.

25. Ibid No 17907 f. 33, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 25th September 1809.

26. Ibid f. 254. Cooper to Ogilvie, 1st October 1809.

27. Ibid No 22080 f. 87. Sparks to Ogilvie, 14th July 1809.

28. Ibid No 17907 f. 52. Carey to Ogilvie, 13th September 1809.

29. A Guia was a document stating when and where a vehicle was hired, for what service or for how long a period and by what route it was to travel. When signed by the commissaries at all the successive stages it constituted a claim for payment of the hire.

30. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17907. Callow to Ogilvie, 23rd October 1809.

31. The commodity transported was also a factor in some arrangements. See N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17907 f. 16, where cart owners offered to serve for 9 reis per league per alquier for barley or 11 for wheat.

even allowing for their not being loaded beyond six hundred pounds. Whether calculated by weight or by time, mule transport cost about a third more than cart transport on the basis of the most expensive agreements. This economy, combined with the fact that the army was short of mules (which were always used first to meet the needs of the regiments) until late in the year, ensured that the unwillingness of the inhabitants to make their carts available did not deter the commissariat from the attempt to gather a large body of cart transport. It did however make it impossible for them to rely on voluntary agreements as they had intended and obliged them instead to work in co-operation with the civil power under regulations passed by the Portuguese Regency.

The Portuguese measures were designed not only to regulate the requisitioning of carts but also to compel the vehicles to serve and by punishment to deter desertion or theft of the cargo carried. By October 1809 there was already in existence a legal penalty for desertion and on the 16th November 1809 the Intendant General of Police was given control over transport requisitions under the new title of Inspector General of Transports. The ineffectiveness of these arrangements and the unreliability of the register of all available transport, evident at the end of 1809, was highlighted in 1810 when the transfer of most of the army to Beira necessitated the establishment of new transport routes. Enormous difficulty was experienced in finding the carts to ply from the Mondego and Douro depots to the troops³². In May a Special Commission, headed by General Leite, was established to try recalcitrant magistrates but does not appear to have been effective in solving the problem³³ which in any case often lay lower down the social order in disobedience to the magistrates themselves. Lieutenant Simmons discovered this at Sampaio where he arrived wounded in July 1810 and "sent to the juiz de fore to request him to procure me two bullocks. He told me the people would not obey him now, but directed me to send my servant armed and to take the first two bullocks he could find"³⁴. Wellington's complaints about the inadequacy of all the legislation designed to assist him with transport continued and ultimately bore fruit in a new regulation completed on the 7th December 1811, to come into force as from two months later. "This regulation.. will be ..

32. See for example Despatches V p 71, Wellington to Beresford, 1st May 1810. "We have great difficulty about the carts to move forward only fourteen leagues". Also P.R.O. W.O. 57/39, Kennedy to Gordon, 10th July 1810.

33. Leite was a curious choice as head of the Commission since he was Governor of Alentejo and Commandant of Elvas while the difficulties over carts were occurring in the Mondego valley.

34. George Simmons ed. Verner, A British Rifle Man, London 1899, p 84.

as ineffectual for the purpose of carrying on the war, as the former regulations on the same subject"³⁵, wrote Wellington, and it certainly does not seem to have rendered the commissaries' task any easier. Its two main defects were vagueness - for example an ox cart was not to march further than three or three and a half leagues a day and was not to be absent from its district for longer than twenty or thirty days - and insufficient severity to deter deserters or truants, the former being punished with a month's imprisonment, the latter with a fortnight plus a fine to represent the value of the transport withheld. Such a relatively short imprisonment was deemed by many preferable to service with the army³⁶. The only important new departure in the 1811 regulation was the institution of a collecting fee for the magistrate, a measure suggested by Wellington, and although this was no doubt an encouragement to exertion on their part, it was no inducement to the cart owners themselves.

The great demand created by the 1812 campaign for carts in the north produced shortages and irregularities reminiscent of those we have observed in the south during 1809. Consider Mr Buckham's account of a requisition for carts at Almeida. "The order from the Intendant of the province was immediately circulated among the different frontier villages an interval of some time elapsed, sufficient for the accumulation of the whole - but neither cars nor any information respecting them ever reached us. Upon this mockery of the Intendant's order Mr Flanner thought it necessary to assume towards the alcaldes of the different villages an appearance of determined resolution supported by a portion of Military force which was required from the Governor of Almeida for that purpose. The effect produced was trifling and temporary, fourteen cars only out of the fifty being convened and those too principally owing to the exertions of the (illegible) of Villar de Curvo - Two days ago six of these cars upon their return from Ciudad Rodrigo deserted to their different homes, leaving us 8 only for the use of the depot"³⁷. Breakages and desertions among the Spanish and Portuguese carts were again frequent. "Few carts of those that I am now dispatching return to do effective duty afterwards"³⁸, wrote Head at Celorico. Hired

35. Despatches VIII p 580. Wellington to Stuart, 18th February 1812.

36. This was Wellington's opinion, see Despatches VIII p 413, Wellington to Stuart, 28th November 1811. It is supported by the view expressed in N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17958 f 68. Report by Ogilvie, 30th June 1809.

37. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17977. Buckham to Dalrymple, 16th September 1812.

38. Ibid No 17954 f 17. Head to Ogilvie, 23rd November 1812.

carts had to be watched every minute of the day and night³⁹. The situation was aggravated by the chance that the greatest need for carts was felt in October and November, a time of year when the cattle were normally beginning their winter rest and when their owners were even more reluctant than usual to have them worked. The natural consequence of these difficulties was that the commissariat was obliged to break faith with the cart owners and employ force to retain as many carts as they needed. Spanish cars were to be sent forward "by persuasion or compulsion"⁴⁰ wrote Kennedy from Olmeda, and again four days later, "Their services are at present indispensable and you must endeavour by fair means to prevail upon them to go on willingly"⁴¹.

One reason for the difficulties experienced by the commissariat in 1812 was the greatly increased number of carts that they employed. The growth of the transport system can be seen by comparing the number of cars based at Ciudad Rodrigo in late 1812 with the resources deployed at Badajoz towards the end of 1809. On the 8th November 1809 Badajoz employed 168 carts (21 of them mule carts) and 894 mules, mostly on the road to Elvas and thence either to Portalegre or to Estremoz, though other local routes also featured⁴². By August 1812 there were based at Ciudad Rodrigo no fewer than 1,990 carts, nearly half operating between that place and Almeida while others acted towards Celorico, Pesqueira, Salamanca and the Quinta dos Fulhos variously. This large number dwindled as the season advanced and the rest period for cattle approached, by the 21st September the total being reduced to 1,421 and by 18th October further diminished to 1,038, but the increase in the scale of operations is nonetheless evident⁴³. The simple comparison does not however represent the increase of effectiveness in the supply of provisions as two further factors should be noticed, first that the ration strength for which British commissariat were responsible had nearly doubled in the interim and second that the carts from Ciudad Rodrigo were operating over a distance on the road about half as great again as

39. It was ordered that all escorts arriving with carts should deliver them personally to the commissary. Purveyor Dickson wrote of a case where this had not been done, "eleven of these cars are actually in the possession of the commissariat and .. the rest made their escape". N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17918 f.1. Dickson to Ogilvie, 26th October 1812.

40. Ibid No 17879 f. 53. Kennedy to Ogilvie, 30th October 1812.

41. Ibid f. 38. Kennedy to Ogilvie, 3rd November 1812.

42. Ibid No 17256 f. 73. 'Return of the means of transport at Badajoz', 8th November 1809. A mule may be taken to have carried 250 lbs, a cart 600 lbs.

43. Ibid No 17931 ff 13-21, for all three figures relating to carts.

those from Badajoz had had to cover. Taking into account these considerations the August figure alone represents a real increase in the capacity of the transport relative to the calls upon it while the October figure represents a substantial decrease.

Regarding the degree to which Ciudad Rodrigo was enabled to maintain its stocks by employing these quantities of transport it is impossible to state with certainty. For one thing the above figures take no account of the carts hired at Quinta dos Fulhos, Almeida and Celorico and despatched to Ciudad Rodrigo. For another, not all of the carts were employed in the carriage of provisions⁴⁴. Perhaps the greatest uncertainty⁴⁵ and surely the greatest cause for suspicion about the adequacy of the transport derives once again from the popular unwillingness to co-operate with the department in the matter of carts. The enormous variety of turn around times taken by these vehicles and the invariable discrepancy between the speeds the commissaries expected and those the cart convoys achieved can only be explained by the sluggishness of the carters themselves. The journey between Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida provides one example among many, the distance being roughly thirty miles in each direction and the time expected over the round trip being six days, an average of ten miles a day without allowance for loading time. None of the 851 carts engaged on this journey when the August statement of transport was prepared had returned within six days. This is not surprising since a day might easily have been lost loading and twelve miles a day for ill repaired carts on poor roads was a large demand, but that some should have been unable to cover the sixty miles in twenty three days is amazing and might be felt to be an unrepresentative freak were it not paralleled on almost every other route the depot operated⁴⁵. The harm done to the transport system by such recalcitrance cannot be estimated but must have been the principal reason why the progress of the 1812 campaign gradually drained the depots of Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida of provisions so that the army on its return to Portugal found further privations in its new quarters and the wounded retiring in convoys were reduced to begging biscuit from passers by⁴⁶.

44. Carts were also required for carrying ammunition, clothing and field equipment besides such minor items as stationery and medical stores.

45. See also Despatches VIII p 514, Wellington to Liverpool, 7th January 1812. "What do you think of empty carts taking two days to go ten miles on a good road?" That at least was in winter.

46. N.A.M. Acc 7508-24. Morris himself was without rations for seven days in November, two on the retreat from Salamanca and five in his quarters at Pinhel later in the month.

In the course of 1812 an attempt to assist the cart service by establishing a regular formation of commissariat owned carts was introduced. The idea originated in autumn 1811 when Wellington and Kennedy decided to form two 'Grand Divisions' of 400 carts each, staffed with regular commissariat employees and built at Lisbon, Almeida, Oporto and in England to a constant pattern⁴⁷. On his return to England in November 1811 Kennedy brought with him a cart as a model for the contractor and although some delay was caused when the customs at Portsmouth seized the pattern car and the Treasury's intervention was required to restore it, 200 such bullock carts were shipped for Portugal in April and May 1812. Kennedy had his reservations about the design of these carts. In February he apparently felt the model car to be "much too heavy"⁴⁸ and was asked at the end of the month to examine five completed copies and give his further opinion. Possibly not wishing to risk taking an initiative that would be disapproved of by Wellington⁴⁹, Kennedy waited until the 26th May before thinking of some improvements to the pattern of the cars, by which time the first 200 were mostly already at sea and the 100 subsequently demanded were in the course of being built. It proved too late to incorporate Kennedy's modifications and the final 100 cars were completed to the original specifications and sent to the Peninsula in July. Although belated, the Commissary-General's suspicions about the pattern⁵⁰ may have been well founded. D.A.C.G. Kensington described the Car Train as "very irregular as their (sic) being nought for the cattle to feed they knock up & the cars break so much, that they are generally 7 to 12 days before they recommence after unloading to proceed to their respective depots for loading again"⁵¹. Notwithstanding these criticisms, the carts did useful service in 1812 at the siege of Badajoz and in the north later in the year, and when the army went into winter quarters they were established on the route between Raiva and Celorico, "the road upon which we never could collect any considerable number of country cars for the service of the army"⁵².

47. The scheme is explained in two memoranda by Wellington. Despatches VIII, pp 625 and 629.

48. P.R.O. W.O. 58/132. Herries to Kennedy, 4th February 1812.

49. "The car must be made in every respect according to the pattern". Despatches VIII, memorandum of 21st December 1811.

50. The main difference between the commissariat cars and the local ox-carts must have been that the former had iron axle trees and presumably a fixed axle.

51. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17904 f. 5. Kensington to Ogilvie, 9th October 1812.

52. Ibid No 17946, Kennedy to Ogilvie, 28th November 1812.

Before passing on to more general considerations, the role of the Royal Waggon Train should be noticed though its numbers were never great enough to render it of much importance in the transport system. The officers and men of this corps had a certain number of spring waggons, appropriated after the autumn of 1812 solely to ambulance duties and frequently used to transport sick and wounded prior to that date⁵³. Besides running and maintaining these carts, of which there were never a great number, the effectives of the Waggon Train assisted the commissariat by doing temporary duties of the kind one would have expected to find performed by conductors or junior clerks. Thus two non-commissioned officers and eight privates of the corps went to Oporto in May 1809 to superintend the muleteers, and officers occupied themselves in the summer collecting carts and tending to the public mules. Helpful though it must have been to have odd transport duties carried out from time to time, the Royal Waggon Train was never a sufficiently numerous force for its assistance in this manner to have been important.

For the transport of supplies between depots the Peninsular commissariat relied heavily on local carts, hired or requisitioned for each stage of the journey. Although mule transport was also used for this purpose in 1809 the mules were thereafter, as we shall see, re-assigned to military units and their use in rear, although by no means unheard of, became much less common. Requisition, the usual mode of procurement, was only resorted to because it proved impossible to acquire enough carts by voluntary hiring agreements and its operation became systematised. At the large entrepot depots a park of carts would be maintained, not hired for any particular service but kept until used for a journey after which they would be paid off and allowed to return home, unless of course necessity required their continued service⁵⁴. The disadvantages of this system have already been pointed out and can almost all be traced back to the resistance of the cart owners to the conscription of themselves and their carts. Since there seem to have been few large scale cart owners, the commissariat were mainly dealing with men of no great wealth who were not cushioned by large ownership against the risks of loss, breakage or casualty to the draft animals, who could not afford to wait the

53. See Ward p 89, also General Orders 5th October 1810 (under 'spring waggons') and Simmons p 81. Simmons, shot in the thigh, found the motion of the spring waggon "ten times worse, if possible" than that of the bullock carts.

54. See for example Head p 274 for an account of the transport at Celorico in late 1811.

long periods that often elapsed before payment could be made and whose reluctance to co-operate is most understandable. The alternative to a requisitioning system must have been to buy or build carts sufficient for the army's needs. Although several hundred carts were built and some bought or otherwise acquired by the department, there were serious hindrances to either method upon a large scale. In the first place the organising and staffing of a large body of public transport would have required more manpower than the commissariat ever had at its disposal⁵⁵, and in the second, public ownership would have thrown the immediate cost of losses to vehicles and animals upon the commissariat. Among the mule transport it was notorious that the public animals were much worse treated than those hired, and it might be expected that public carts would have received no gentle treatment at the hands of the local labour employed to operate them. The third serious consideration was the bullock supply. By requisitioning the army made the agricultural bullocks double as means of transport, whereas had the commissariat sought to buy bullocks for its carts they would have been competing not only against the demand for meat but also against the continued need for draught animals in agriculture. Even greater scarcity and higher prices than those that prevailed must have been the result. Altogether the system of requisitions appears the best possible in the circumstances, its inefficiencies deriving from lack of firm administration on the civil side and a certain shortage of manpower to supervise, for neither of which circumstances was the Peninsular commissariat to blame.

The supplies were collected from the more forward depots by a separate body of transport part of which was attached to each of the units of the army and which was under the control of the various brigade commissaries. This transport duty was almost exclusively the province of mules (and asses) rather than carts from early 1810 onwards and these mules are distinct from those belonging to the regiments for the purpose of carrying baggage. Each infantry regiment was allowed thirteen baggage mules, ten (one for each company) to carry the camp kettles, one for the pay books, one for the medicine chest and one to carry entrenching tools. All but the latter, which was at public expense, were to be provided respectively by the captains

55. For the 800 projected carts of the Commissariat Car Train alone, the Treasury had to provide sixteen more clerks. P.R.O. W.O. 57/3. Harrison to Herries, 1st January 1812.

of companies, the paymasters and the surgeons who all received an allowance for this purpose. Sir John Cradock, while commanding the army early in 1809, had ordered the commissariat to provide the animals but their replacement thereafter was the responsibility of their new owners, the Commissary-General only being expected to provide a dollar a month towards the cost of re-shoeing⁵⁶. In early 1813 when the army adopted a smaller pattern of kettle which did not require a mule for its carriage, the camp kettle mules were officially re-assigned to transporting tents, themselves issued to the regiments on a regular basis for the first time in this campaign. Ammunition reserves were also generally carried on mules but this aspect of the service was the responsibility of the Ordnance officers to whom the beasts were made available by the commissariat who had owned or hired them in the first place. The number of mules allocated to the carriage of ordnance stores was settled upon by the General Officer commanding the headquarters of which the brigade commissary and the senior ordnance officer were alike members. A similar practice was followed in the transporting of stores that were the responsibility of the Quartermaster General's department, the Medical department and the Engineers though these were more occasional services than that of the Ordnance.

Although the greatest number of the mules used by the army were hired, a proportion of the supply mules as well as those used for regimental purposes were 'public', that is to say owned by the commissariat and served by muleteers who featured on the roll of regular commissariat employees. All supply mules, public or hired, were grouped in brigades which were units of no consistent size but which remained administratively distinct even when losses whittled them down to very low numbers. The average strength of a mule brigade may have been about fifty animals, with muleteers provided at the rate of one to every three beasts, but in practice the number of mules to a brigade might have been found as high as a hundred or more, or as low as twenty⁵⁷. The mules were, at least from November 1810 onwards, branded in the neck, or, if the muleteers objected, "in any other conspicuous part"⁵⁸ and in the department orders of rather later date, it is explained

56. Cradock seems to have intended that a cart should be provided to each regiment to carry "the Medicine Chest or 2 voyage chests, a canteen of utensils and 20 sets of bedding". N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17972 f. 64. By 1st June however, Wellington speaks of a mule as the proper bearer of medicine chests and baggage carts were not officially sanctioned thereafter.

57. Ward p 88, mentions a brigade of 132 mules which is the largest I have heard of. I have not discovered a brigade taken on with fewer than 20 animals though some which were reduced below that number by losses. For several details about mule brigades, see P.R.O. W.O. 61/108.

59. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17886 f. 25.

that the beasts were to be marked D, C, A or HA according to whether they served an Infantry division, cavalry regiment, the artillery or horse artillery. In the first two cases they bore also the number of the division or regiment to which they were attached⁵⁹. This practice had the advantage of hindering the illicit sale or exchange of army mules as well as making it possible to distinguish a commissariat mule train from one belonging to a private merchant, but did of course make it less convenient to switch mules from one formation to another. The muleteers of each brigade were under the immediate supervision of a 'capataz'⁶⁰ who was himself a muleteer and who kept the pay books, routes and records of work done that were required by the department orders. This same basic organisation was maintained whether the brigade was publicly owned or hired, and if hired, whether from one single proprietor or from several smaller mule owners whose animals were brigaded together for convenience.

The practice of attaching mule brigades to the units of the army was followed from the beginning of 1810 onwards. In 1809 supplies had been carried to the troops and kept up with the troops by more heterogeneous transport formations, among which carts seem to have predominated. Thus in June the transport resources of the 14th Light Dragoons totalled 6 mules and 15 bullock carts⁶¹ and the situation of an unidentified infantry brigade in September was similar, 2 mules and 12 carts sharing the carriage of its supplies. The commissariat had only been enabled to issue a few mules to the units before the Talavera campaign, Hill's and Tilson's brigades receiving only ten each, and this paucity evidently necessitated the field commissaries using whatever means of transport they could obtain. From 1810 onwards however carts are rarely found attached to the troops in the field and never in great numbers⁶². One reason for the scarcity of supply mules in 1809 was that the commissariat took some time to collect a large number of these animals. Some came from the Barbary Coast, arriving in the summer of 1809⁶³, but most were obtained locally by purchase or by hire, mule owners evidently

59. N.A.M. 6807/22. Department Orders, Article 39.

60. The word 'capataz' simply means headman and its use is not peculiar to the mule service.

61. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17907 f. 8. Dillon to Ogilvie, 18th September 1809.

62. The 2nd Division for example possessed 10 bullock carts beside its 769 mules on the 6th November 1810, and was probably not alone in this. Ibid 17984 f 53.

63. At least some of the Barbary mules seem to have been unbroken and wild. See the report of Captain Turner, Royal Waggon Train, Ibid No 17907 f 35. The export of mules from North Africa also featured in Sir William A'Court's dealings with the Barbary powers in 1813, and may be supposed to have occurred on private account in earlier years also, in a manner similar to the cattle supply discussed in chapter III.

being more co-operative than proprietors of carts as no resort to requisition proved necessary. By the end of the year, apart from the regimental baggage mules having been provided, many hundreds of mules were employed, mostly on depot duties. At Badajoz on 8th November 894 mules were in service, 681 being hired and 213 public⁶⁴. Only when the greater part of the army moved north was the system of attaching mule brigades to the various units gradually institutionalised. Schaumann, on his regiment leaving their southern cantonments, received 48 mules "for the transport of supplies"⁶⁵ though he also took 4 carts with him at least as far as Abrantes, and by the 15th March 1810, 28 Brigades of mules (totalling 1,578 beasts) were attached to the units while a further 18 brigades were held at Headquarters for general transport duties⁶⁶.

The number of mules normally attached to units grew larger in the years succeeding 1810. While an equal division among the units of the 1,578 mules in service in March 1810 would have given each about 100 animals, the usual transport strengths of an infantry brigade and a cavalry regiment in 1812 were about 200 and 250 respectively⁶⁷. This increase in strength represents an increase in the mobility of the units which could now operate at a greater distance from their depots without having recourse to local supplies. At no time however were there enough mules available to keep the troops fully supplied very far in advance - even the comparatively short distance to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo was beyond the capacity of the mule transport wholly to sustain⁶⁸ - and when the army took the field the best the mule brigades could do was provide a partial supply. The evidence for this will be considered in the following chapter, it being now intended to point out the various causes of inefficiency in the mule transport which combined to bring about the incomplete success of the system. In the first place, the system was attacked by natural wastage among the mules themselves. This would occur at any time when a rapid movement of part of the army made unusual demands on the mules attached to it⁶⁹, but under

64. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17256 f. 73. Return of the Means of Transport at Badajoz, 8th November 1809.

65. Ibid No 17907. Dalrymple to Schaumann, 20th December 1809.

66. Ibid No 23100 f. 37. These figures exclude mules serving with the 2nd Division or any of the troops in the south.

67. See Daniel pp 106/7 and P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, following Bisset to Herries, 12th May 1812, for numbers of mules attached to units in 1812.

68. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41 Ibid.

69. For example see Bisset to Cairns, 7th September 1812, asking him to give the mules some corn as "we have been flying through this part of Spain but you can have no idea how much our transport is broken up". N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17954.

more normal circumstances was mainly affected by the season. During the summer few mules were lost, Hulse's brigade of the 6th Division for example claiming the same strength in its attached mules from the end of June to the start of September 1812, but serious losses might be incurred when the animals were required to operate in the winter or over long distances or difficult terrain. The difference between summer and winter operations is illustrated by the experience of Pedro Llorente, who brought 20 mules to serve Head-Quarters in early August 1812. One only had died by the 15th November but between that date and Christmas Eve, 9 out of 19 were lost or "gone deficient"⁷⁰. The winter of 1813/14 in the Pyrenees seems to have occasioned exceptionally heavy losses. "It appears" wrote Dalrymple, "that many of the hired mules have died during the winter from excessive fatigue, in consequence of the bad state of the roads over which they have been required to travel"⁷¹. How large the overall casualties were can only be guessed but the number was plainly large and the effect of these losses upon the service can be inferred by observing that one third fewer mules were attached to certain divisions at the end of 1813 than had been serving the same divisions in the middle of 1812⁷². In the winter it became necessary for the commissariat to issue corn to the mules (four pounds a day was the usual rate) to maintain even such numbers as did service, but this supply further reduced the efficiency of the mule brigades as the animals on their laden journey had to carry their own fodder as well as supplies to their division. The practical difficulties of supporting operations in winter were thus great.

Payment was a further cause of problems in the mule transport, not because the remuneration was too low but because it was often long delayed. In fact the payments to owners of mules were most generous. They received a dollar a day for each mule employed, subject to a reduction of 240 reis (800 reis to the dollar) when the animals received fodder from the commissariat, and they were required to provide for every three mules one muleteer, for

70. P.R.O. W.O. 61/108.

71. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17978 f. 72. Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 23rd January 1814.

72. Omitting the 7th Division, which for some reason seems to have suffered more than the others - "I have brigades now consisting of only 5 or 6 mules each of which formerly had 60 & 70" N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17952 f 29, Dobree to Ogilvie 24th December 1813 - the comparisons read:

		June 1812	Dec 1813
See N.A.M. 7512 - 124 and Daniel pp 106/7.	3rd Division	553	372
	4th Division	590	372
	6th Division	530	389.

whose pay they received an allowance of 80 reis a day, the muleteer also obtaining rations on the same basis as the troops⁷³. These rates must have made the large mule owners wealthy men. Dionisio Lorenzo, to take the case of only a small proprietor though larger than some, received pay for 17 mules and an extra dollar as capataz of the brigade of which his beasts formed a part⁷⁴. Net of forage (calculated for the sake of argument at the commissariat's own estimate) and payments to his muleteers, he may be supposed to have earned over eleven dollars a day, equivalent at the rate of exchange of early 1812 to about three pounds sterling and over three times as much as was earned by an Assistant Commissary. A few men owning tens, or even hundreds, of mules would have earned vastly more than this and the many smaller owners rather less, though still a comfortable sum. Particularly for the smaller owners however, the financial embarrassment of the Military Chest during much of the war posed difficulties as the expenses of feeding and attending to the mules could not be delayed until payment for their services had been made⁷⁵. Payment in arrear was a matter of deliberate policy and no commissary was permitted to make payments to muleteers without a specific authority from the Commissary-General. The shortage of money however caused the arrears to mount far quicker than was intended. By the middle of 1812 the mule brigades were at least a year in arrear (except of course those taken on less than a year before), by the start of 1813 Kennedy reckoned fifteen months arrears to be normal and although this was reduced before the start of the campaign of 1813, December of that year saw him reckoning the delay in payment as between twenty and twenty five months⁷⁶. Naturally few owners could afford to wait so long and many were obliged to negotiate such vouchers as were occasionally given them at depreciated rates⁷⁷ thus deterring owners who might otherwise have been attracted by the good pay offered. By summer 1813, not surprisingly, Ogilvie began to find that "the muleteers prefer the service of the merchants to ours"⁷⁸.

The large build up of arrears of pay had one advantage, namely to deter the desertion of proprietors already long in the service who would lose all claim to their money if they left the army. This was particularly relevant

73. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16926 f. 33.

74. P.R.O. W.O. 61/108.

75. The proprietors also stood to lose when their animals became casualties, as the compensation they were entitled to receive would be as tardy as the pay.

76. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, Kennedy to Herries 14th February 1813, and 57/43 Kennedy to Herries, 22nd December 1813.

77. Tomkinson, p 139, thought that certain commissaries profited by such transactions. His calculations as to the expense of the mule system seem to be based on an overestimate of a muleteer's pay though an underestimate of their numbers.

78. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17976. Ogilvie to Kennedy 23rd August 1813.

during the winter spent in the Pyrenees when conditions for many mule brigades were so bad⁷⁹. The same arrears however tended against the good of the service by aggravating both the difficulty of maintaining discipline and the problem of theft. Some disciplinary troubles might have been expected under any circumstances in view of the shortage of commissariat officers and the inevitable language problem - "were much delayed in not knowing the language as we could not find the muleteers"⁸⁰ remarked Morris on only the second day of his journey to the front - but the dissatisfaction produced by the arrears made it harder for the commissaries to restrain abuses. A leisurely attitude, noticed with disfavour by several commissaries at different times as prevalent among the mule owners, could not be checked⁸¹. Though it was normal department policy when dealing with hired transport to let it go at its own pace, the practice of the mule service sometimes appears to have abused this tolerance. The muleteers "all make for their respective homes as soon as they are discharged from the division to which they belong and meet at their place of destination on an appointed day"⁸², explained a conductor posted to guide them beyond Alba de Tormes in 1812. While this abuse was most likely to occur on long journeys, the muleteers could prove hard to manage on the shortest trips as well, as Morris found when his charges refused to proceed after it began to rain, on the grounds that there would be no shelter at their destination that night⁸³. Some instances of alleged neglect and indolence were doubtless insignificant, meaning only that occasionally the muleteer's pace was too slow to satisfy a particularly zealous commissary or meet a particular emergency, and no doubt they were also sometimes blamed to cover up shortcomings in the department itself. However not all of the manifestations of contrariness by the mule owners can be explained in this way, and their discontent about arrears coupled with the knowledge that the army could not do without all of them, must have been responsible for much sluggishness. The discontent indeed displayed itself openly on occasions like the mutiny at Ciudad Rodrigo in 1812, when

79. Head p 322.

80. N.A.M. Acc 7508 - 24.

81. For example House at Corticada in 1810 complained that the muleteers could not be made to re-assemble for hours after the arrival of a convoy to be forwarded and that "the delay is entirely owing to their indolence". N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17972 House to Ogilvie, 10th October 1810. See also Ibid No 17955 Carey to Ogilvie 23rd December 1813. Carey asserts that neglect had its roots in discontent about arrears of pay.

82. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17899 f 111. Connolly to Ogilvie, 28th September 1812.

83. N.A.M. Acc 7508 - 24. One of the men apparently drew a knife to emphasise his refusal to march.

three capatazes deserted and all the remaining owners threatened to march their mules on Lisbon unless paid⁸⁴, or like the grand meeting in 1813 of Wellington and the Commissary-General with the proprietors⁸⁵, and should be borne in mind as adding delays and minor inefficiencies to the major problem associated with the mule transport system, that of theft.

Granted the shortage of responsible conductors to oversee supply convoys, theft must always have been a temptation, but two particular circumstances contributed to raise the problem to a serious level in the Peninsula. In the first place, the commissariat evidently trod warily in the matter of punishments for fear of losing the services of the essential mule brigades. We have just seen some small irregularities which had to be ignored, and we now find that demonstrable theft had often similarly to be overlooked. Even in 1810, before the demand for mules was as great as it later became and before the arrears grew to such a serious extent, the matter was delicate and General Hill directed that some muleteers caught stealing should be tried by their capatazes and colleagues "having first ascertained that the punishment they are disposed to inflict upon them is adequate to the offence committed"⁸⁶. What punishment was to be deemed adequate is not stated, but the effort, at least in appearance, to allow the muleteers to settle their own discipline internally suggests that the issue was sensitive. As the arrears mounted and the need for mules grew it became even more vital to avoid generating resentment. "Mr Fanton informs me that you imprisoned a Capataz, and that the Brigade in consequence deserted - we must treat these people well, consider the crisis of the moment, their arrears of pay, and you must be aware of the importance of using every means in our power to keep them in our service"⁸⁷, wrote Routh to a subordinate. Admittedly that was written in the 'crisis of the moment' and when the muleteers' depredations became more serious some days later, he adopted a more vigorous policy, but the passage nevertheless demonstrates the need felt to conciliate the muleteers. Through the exercise of such sentiments some thefts went unpunished, such as the stealing of fifty corn sacks by Morris' muleteers⁸⁸,

84. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41. Enc. in Dalrymple to Herries, 20th September 1812.

85. Larpent II p 92. Also N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17876 f 52. Department Order, 22nd December 1813.

86. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17974 f 174. Rooke to Ogilvie, 31st August 1810.

87. N.A.M. Acc 7701 - 36 A No 18. Routh to Marsden, 8th January 1812.

88. N.A.M. Acc 7508 - 24.

and others, like the more serious depredations instanced by Larpent in the Pyrenees⁸⁹, could only be noticed by inscribing the value of the deficiency on the brigade's payment certificate, to be deducted from their next pay issue. This, the only action required by Departmental Orders in cases of theft or suspicious deficiency, was quite devoid of deterrent effect because the pay, as we have seen, was normally so much in arrears that a threatened deduction from it when it ultimately arrived had little impact⁹⁰. Instead stealing provisions and selling them became another way of drawing a little pay in advance, another irregularity requiring tacit acceptance on the part of the department.

To attempt an estimate of the effect on the service of what were euphemistically known as 'deficiencies occasioned by mule transport' is difficult, as so little generalised information remains. Some consignments of barley received at Badajoz in December 1809 are said to have lost 4% in transit by mules⁹¹. In 1812 Bisset complained of the shortage of conductors, stating that rations arrived 20 or 25% short in weight⁹². This appears to accuse all transport, not just the mule brigades, and may appear a large proportion but it is certainly smaller than losses known to have occurred on certain specific occasions. Routh, three days after the placatory letter already quoted, spoke of "deficiencies amounting to almost one half"⁹³ and while this seems to have been an exaggeration, such precise figures as remain give deficiencies of between 30 and 40% occurring on this campaign⁹⁴. The best long term figures available are those of the deficiencies found in mule transport attached to Mr Marsden between the 20th January and 1st June 1812. Upon the presumption that all the supplies carried by these mules were for the consumption of Ashworth's brigade, to which Marsden was attached, there would be roughly a 10%

89. Larpent II p 92.

90. Apart from being a poor restraint at the best of times, even this measure of punishment was often omitted, which caused confusion in the accounts after the war. See N.A.M. Acc 7701 - 36 D No 77. Extract, Hull to Kennedy, 10th February 1815.

91. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17877 f 34 seq.

92. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, Bisset to Herries, 11th May 1812.

93. N.A.M. Acc 7701 - 36 A No 23.

94. The theft mentioned by Larpent (v.s.) is given in round figures and represents 25% of the cargo.

deficiency in the bread supply⁹⁵. It is likely that 10% or less is a more accurate average figure for deficiencies in the period 1812-14 than the higher estimates, for two reasons. First it is obvious from the correspondence that a deficiency of 20% or more was a matter worthy of remark which it would not have been had it happened on every trip. Second, granted the practice of deducting pay for supplies stolen, any mule owners taking regularly more than about 15-20% of their biscuit cargoes would have forfeited all entitlement to any pay whatever⁹⁶ and this happening on any scale would have rendered the system of deductions so obviously pointless as not to pass unnoticed in correspondence and memoirs. If about 10% (and more likely less than more) is accepted as an approximate average deficiency in goods travelling by mule in the second half of the war, then the corresponding figure during 1809-11 was very likely rather less, as the arrears had not accumulated to such an extent, nor had the need for transport grown so pressing as to prevent the imposition of stiffer penalties for depredations in that period.

The various inefficiencies of the mule transport are thus all attributable in great part to shortage of money. The ability to pay mule owners regularly as well as generously would have improved relations between them and the commissaries, enabled penalties to be imposed that would have deterred much stealing and permitted the hiring of mules in greater numbers, thus increasing the distance from the depots at which the troops could be supplied. The system employed from 1810 onwards of attaching more and more mules to individual units, their efforts to be directed by the brigade commissary to whom they were attached, worked smoothly within the limitations imposed by the number of mules available and the distance to the depot, and was given greater flexibility by the maintenance at Headquarters of a transport reserve which was held against various occasional services and was often used to assist field commissaries whose own transport resources were for any reason inadequate. Employing so many mules was of course expensive and was undertaken for the

95. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 H No 104. It is impossible to estimate the deficiencies of alcohol and forage as these were lower priority supplies and it cannot be assumed that sufficient was sent forward to cover consumption, upon which assumption in the case of bread the calculation rests.

96. Obviously the longer their marches and the cheaper per pound the commodity they carried the more they could theoretically 'afford' to steal. Biscuit and flour were relatively expensive and most frequently carried. The above calculation assumes an average turn around time from troops to depot of about 7-9 days.

reason of greater operating flexibility when the army was moving. To some extent the commissariat can be accused of falling between two stools in this matter since the great body of hired mules was more than the units needed in most stationary quarters⁹⁷ yet never enough to maintain very wide ranging operations, but this criticism loses much of its force in view of the problems we have already noted in finding cart transport and which would have rendered it impossible to make the, otherwise economical, replacement of mules by carts when the troops were close to the depots. The excess of mules, not in any case very great, in view of the use of carts being already carried to its reasonable limits, cannot be said to have been improvident. The performance of the transport system with all its faults was quite adequate as long as the army remained within comparatively few marches of the rivers, say within the borders of Portugal, but at greater distances it became necessary to rely increasingly upon local resources for the sustenance of the troops. The commissariat system on campaign is now to be considered in greater detail.

97. Bisset's Department Order of April 1812 criticises among other things the habit of keeping mule transport idle when in quarters. "The enormous expence attendant on Mule transport is such that if kept idle for any length of time their pay will nearly cover the value of the Supplies to be removed". B.M. Add Mss 57377 and N.A.M. Acc 7701 - 36 A No 55.

CHAPTER VI : The Logistical Basis of Wellington's Offensive Operations
1812-14.

The three previous chapters have presented evidence that although hampered by shortages of money and transport the commissariat was generally successful in supplying the Peninsular army. The department adopted an eclectic approach to the problem of finding provisions, local purchase and requisition, small local contracts with merchants or magistrates, larger contracts negotiated at command level, large scale purchase in the rear markets, purchase abroad by agents or contractors and imports from the United Kingdom all having their place in the supply. This plethora of methods gave a degree of security and flexibility to the army, freeing it from entire dependence either upon its supply line or upon the resources of the locality or upon the competence and honesty of its contractors. The difficulties confronting the commissariat in providing this supply and its exertions to overcome them however have thus far been considered in isolation from the other aspects of the war effort. This method of analysis, evidently convenient, is also less unrealistic than might appear because of the long periods for which the Anglo-Portuguese army remained in static positions, frequently not even in contact with enemy forces¹. During such times the duties of the commissariat were unhampered either by enemy action or by many strategic contingencies, and the insular attention we have paid to their activities in the previous part of this work accounts satisfactorily both at local and command levels for a good deal of the work done by the department in the Peninsula. Nonetheless in a war all days are not of equal importance to the outcome and most of the attention of British historians has been focused upon the operations of the allied army. If these do indeed deserve their important status, then a correspondingly greater weight ought to be attached to the experiences of the commissariat when cooperating with military operations rather than when subsisting garrisons and cantonned troops, and the emphasis in number of words at least, laid by this study upon supply under non-operational conditions appears misplaced. That it is not so derives from an inherent difference between the difficulties faced by a commander and the commissariat difficulties we are considering. A battle

1. The most lengthy such periods are from September to December 1809, January to September 1810 and December 1812 to May 1813, but a good deal of 1811 and the first half of 1812 was spent either stationary in familiar areas or marching along previously prepared routes quite free from enemy interference.

or a striking manoeuvre may alter the range of strategic possibilities without at all changing the nature of the commissary's problems. The battle of Salamanca for example presented Wellington at a single stroke with an embarrassment of quite new and unexpected options as to future operations. The Commissary-General, the day after the victory as the day before, was facing the same difficulties of raising money, finding transport, making do with insufficient trained personnel, negotiating for an assured meat supply from Portugal and supervising the activities in the field of all subordinate officers. It is very noticeable that major military events virtually never feature in commissariat correspondence, and where they do it is as a postscript, rather as interesting facts of importance decidedly subordinate to the department's business in hand.

Much therefore of the progress of the department may be charted without overt reference to the military operations. Nonetheless since a central concern of this thesis is both the effectiveness of the support provided by the commissariat for Wellington's plans and in turn the way in which these plans were themselves limited by what the commissariat could and could not do, it is necessary to consider cases where the troops were marching and in contact with the enemy as well as the situation, statistically more common, of their being encamped. This chapter intends to examine the commissariat on campaign, and in particular on campaigns carried out in advance of the positions normally occupied by the troops. Thus the transfers of force, from north to south in early summer 1809 and again from south to north in the early days of 1810, are not considered here, as being only changes of front along interior lines prepared before the marches. Nor does the retreat to Torres Vedras and the maintenance of the army in the lines appear relevant since for most of the divisions this was simply a withdrawal along a pre-existent line of supply. Some irregularities took place after Coimbra was abandoned, and the Commissary-General admitted to destroying 20,000 rations of corn, 35 puncheons of rum and 6 wine pipes to prevent their capture by the French². The newly formed depot at Espinhal had also hurriedly to be broken up and distributed among the nearest troops, but since the retreat was premeditated and never conducted at a headlong pace it posed few problems

2. P.R.O. W.O. 57/38, Kennedy to Gordon, 14th October 1810. French sources mention the capture of stores at various points on their advance, notably Figueira Condeixa and Vila Nova: many of these stores were certainly Portuguese. See also Schaumann p 256 for a case, doubtless not isolated, of plundering during the retreat.

of supply. The frontier operations that occupied much of 1811 are also not relevant to our present purpose as they rarely took the army far from the positions in which troops would normally be cantoned and where the arrangements for supply were already made. Instead the attention of this chapter will be directed upon the operations of 1812-14, partly since these were the largest in scale geographically and numerically as well as the most important historically (Masséna's invasion of Portugal excepted) that were undertaken in the Peninsula but largely because they involved considerable marches away from areas in which the troops had previously been supplied and thus posed the greatest problems for the commissariat.

Before 1812 the Anglo-Portuguese army had only been involved in three operations of the offensive type we are considering. The capture of Oporto and subsequent pursuit of Soult to the north was a short campaign on which the pursuing forces outran their supplies because of the speed of the French retreat rather than through any defects in the commissariat³. The Talavera campaign, notorious for its lamentable lack of commissariat support, is a case apart because it is obvious that very few arrangements for the supply of the British troops were made by the department, presumably because the Spaniards were supposed to be capable of providing the supplies they offered. We have already seen how little transport was attached to the units for the march into Spain and this was later to make it impossible for the British to forage far afield when competition in August from Spanish forces rendered it necessary. As to the support from the rear, top priority seems to have been assigned to ammunition and most of the carts found proceeding to join the army in July are engaged on this service rather than carrying forward food. Mr Downie, at Castello Branco the final link in the chain of supply in Portugal, appears to have reasoned that the carts, travelling slowly, would not overtake the army until it halted which would not be in his view until it was brought to battle and would therefore be in need of ammunition. That so junior an officer should exercise any discretion in a case so important is a further suggestion that the supply organisation for the advance had been sketchily prepared⁴. Even under better arrangements it would not have been easy to force large trains of Portuguese transport to cross the Spanish border,

3. This is not to suggest that there were no defects in the commissariat arrangements, only that the circumstances of the pursuit from Oporto are not very informative about them.

4. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 22080 f 120. In fairness to Murray it should be remembered that Downie was not a very docile officer and may possibly have been following his own opinion contrary to orders.

and the co-operation of the Spanish authorities would have been required. As is well known this co-operation was not forthcoming and the wonder is not that the British were forced to retire but that, poorly supplied with transport and in competition with a Spanish army at least equally numerous, they were enabled to remain until the middle of August in a country whence, only two months before, the French 1st corps had been obliged to depart for want of sustenance⁵.

The third occasion before 1812 when the army marched forward away from its supplies was in spring 1811, when Masséna retreated into Spain and was followed by allied troops from the Rio Maior. The supply arrangements on this march were strained even more than they would have been anyhow by the recent order that all Portuguese units forming part of British divisions should be supplied by the British commissariat, instantly increasing by about a third the number of mouths to be fed by British commissaries⁶. The pursuit commenced on the 5th March and appears to have run out of food by the 15th. The ten days provisions thus consumed must have been carried by the mule brigades keeping up with the columns, but as the animals had no time to turn back for replenishment no food remained at the end of the time. A good supply however had been directed to Figueira by sea and this began to arrive up-river very soon after the 16th, the day on which the pursuit had been constrained to halt⁷. The following week was a matter of stops and starts with many corps missing their rations, and, although the Douro and Mondego depots could be restocked comparatively speedily, the dislocation of the land transport system brought about by the invasion must have been the principal reason why, during 1811, stores accumulated in the rear depots much more quickly than they were consumed at the front⁸. The troops in the south too, intending initially the relief and subsequently the recapture of Badajoz, easily supplied from Abrantes on the first stage of their journey, also found themselves outrunning their supplies, and the support they received from the rear was not so efficient as was the case in the north. D.C.G. Thompson was dismissed the service for failing to send forward 500 carts with provisions for

5. Wellington's indignant denials notwithstanding, some appropriation of Spanish provisions did take place, which, combined with much scouring of the landscape, very little help from Portugal and the mysterious labours of Sr. Lozano de Torres, constituted the army's commissariat for most of July and the first half of August. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17970 f 51, Findlay to Ogilvie, 6th August 1809. Despatches V p 24, Wellington to Cuesta, 11th August 1809.

6. Despatches VII p 332, Memorandum of 5th March 1811.

7. Daniel p 37.

8. See chapter III, 'Bread'.

Beresford's troops and in consequence of this lapse, wrote Ogilvie, "I was obliged to break up my office to send all my clerks and to cause the magistrates to bake bread and furnish transport - ... I was obliged to entrust country people also and send them into Spain with sums of money to pay for supplies and the means of transport with passports of Gen'l Castanos"⁹. The contrast between the provenance of supplies on the Tagus with that near Badajoz is obvious from a comparison of the sums disbursed by Ogilvie for provisions in different months. In January and February, near Almeirim and Chamusca, his average daily supply expenditure was 965 milreis; in April and May, near Badajoz, the equivalent figure was 4,150¹⁰. The prices Ogilvie paid are unknown but at reasonable commodity prices this larger daily disbursement, less that part of it expended on forage, would have fed at least 10,000 men. In the second half of the year depots were once more established forward in this sector and transport arrangements were instituted to enable troops on the frontier to draw many of their rations from the rear.

All the three cases briefly considered above thus demonstrate Wellington's operations hampered by shortages of supply, although paradoxically the only proven instance of major culpability on the part of the commissariat took place in a branch of the service not seriously affected: neither the battle of Albuera nor the sieges of Badajoz were prevented by supplies failing. Viewed in this light the prognostications for the campaign of 1812 were not good. On the other hand all these three operations were special cases. The attack on Oporto was carried out before the army's transport had been regularised upon the pattern followed from 1810 onwards, the Talavera campaign had been undertaken without many supply arrangements on the understanding that the Spanish authorities would provide supplies and the pursuit of Masséna led the army through a region designedly stripped of provisions six months before and then passed and re-passed by the hungry invasion forces. Even the army admitted that the commissariat had done well on this occasion to make the march possible at all¹¹. Thus on each of these campaigns the

9. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17877, Ogilvie to Sargent, 26th November 1827.

10. Ibid No 17895. The months are commissariat months which run from the 25th to the 24th. The point is not as straightforward as it is here presented since in May the additional strength of the 4th division had joined Beresford's force, but it remains a striking comparison.

11. For example Tomkinson, pp 98 and 140.

commissariat had been restricted in its possible modes of supply. On the first two occasions the supply from the rear had been deficient and on the third, no supplies could be procured locally¹². Before examining the main campaign of 1812, it is intended to look more closely at the extent to which different means of supply were employed to sustain operations and this will be done by considering one short campaign for which (comparatively) good statistical information is available.

The campaign with which we are concerned is Lieutenant-General Hill's advance from the neighbourhood of Albuquerque upon Merida and Almendralejo, for the purpose of distracting the Army of the South from two of its current projects, the hunting of General Ballasteros' army and the attack on Tarifa. Wellington feared the march might prove impossible for the commissariat to support. "The principal difficulty, however, which occurs to me in making a movement upon Merida, consists in the want of supplies... it is impossible to procure money to pay on delivery the enormous sums required for every article which the troops want. The march to Merida will increase your distance from your magazines to such a degree, as to render the supply of the troops from them very difficult and precarious"¹³. Hill replied that "having spoken to Mr Routh on the subject of supplies.. he does not seem to apprehend any great difficulty"¹⁴, and set out across the Guadiana on the 27th December 1811 with about 15,000 men and over 2,500 horses¹⁵. For the purposes of calculation it is necessary to estimate the numbers of men supplied by the British commissariat, since the force included Campbell's Portuguese cavalry brigade who "are only to be occasionally supplied when their own means fail"¹⁶ and Hamilton's Portuguese division and its attached artillery of which the same was true. Ashworth's brigade however, being part of the 2nd division, was supplied by the British. Deducting the independent Portuguese units left some 9,500 mouths and perhaps 1,500 to 2,000 horses

12. "Nothing could be purchased on the road but fruit". Daniel p 45. The advanced troops benefited from animals left behind by the French, whose rear guard was the comparatively well-fed 6th corps. Schaumann p 291.

13. Despatches VIII p 449, Wellington to Hill, 19th December 1811.

14. B.M. Add Mss 35062 f 110, Hill to Wellington, 21st December 1811.

15. Oman V pp 130-3 deals with the campaign. Oman seems to be wrong in putting Hill's force at 12,000 men. His text and appendices on the point however present anomalies which it is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate further than noticing that the 12,000 figure is much too low and that the cause of the error is probably his opinion that Ashworth's brigade did not march, which from the Marsden papers it appears to have done.

16. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 17. Routh to Marsden, 8th January 1812.

to be supplied by A.C.G. Routh and his subordinates. In fact this is to understate his responsibility since the Portuguese commissariat proved incapable of supplying its charges and received occasional assistance from British stores¹⁷. Regularly to have supplied the Portuguese would have been beyond Routh's power and our further calculations will be upon the basis of supply being provided only to 9,500 men.

Prior to the advance the force had been supplied mainly from the depot at Portalegre. Routh decided to support the operation by collecting a major depot at Albuquerque. "I am very anxious to hear you have a large depot under your charge, I wish it to be to a great extent"¹⁸, he wrote on the 29th December to Mr Marsden, the officer he had selected to take charge of the stores at Albuquerque¹⁹. Marsden's instructions make it plain that the new depot was intended to be sufficient for the supply of the little army. He was to maintain four couriers at Albuquerque and send daily returns of provisions to Mr Fanton at Portalegre who would thus be enabled to send forward whatever was necessary to keep up stocks. "In the event of supplies at Albuquerque falling short, he (Marsden) will forward the mules of brigade commissaries to Portalegre; but he is expected always to retain in store a supply of forage corn, Flour and some biscuit for the mules which will be despatched to him by my orders from Mr Kirton"²⁰. Besides what could be sent forward from Portalegre, Marsden was to be supplied with all articles by a gentleman called Don Guillermo, who was also employed to build up a cattle depot at Albuquerque consisting of 300 head, while a further 200 followed the army down the road to Merida.

It is apparent that a considerable extension of the means of transport with the force was necessary to meet the needs of the campaign. Twenty mule cars belonging to Jorge Fernandez were hired at the beginning of 1812 to ply the road from Albuquerque to Merida and carry loads in barrels which could not so easily be transported by a single mule. Further efforts to expand the transport capacity were directed at increasing the number of mules directly serving the troops. On 15th December Routh hired two new brigades and on

17. "Our wants are much increased by the whole of the Portuguese Troops having come entirely dependent upon the British Commissariat". B.M. Add Mss 35059 f 496, Hill to Wellington, 2nd January 1812.

18. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 5. Routh to Marsden 29th December 1811.

19. Marsden had only arrived at the front a few days before. His active service hitherto had been confined to several months in charge of receipts and issues in the depot at Belem.

20. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 3. Routh to Marsden 26th December 1811. Precisely what duty Mr Kirton was executing to be thus preferentially treated is uncertain. It seems most likely that his consignments were intended to form a general reserve, though that they were intended for Hill's headquarters is also possible.

the 20th a third, all totalling 98 asses and 45 mules, while A.C.G. Wilkinson took on a further 26 animals for use between Portalegre and Abrantes. Necessary though they must have been, these transport increases had a major drawback. "I have found" wrote Wilkinson on the 11th January, "that the muleteers employed from these neighbourhoods are greatly inclined to rob the Cargoes they bring, part of a brigade went off last night who were suspected of stealing the shoes brought by them"²¹. The following day Routh sent a firm order that any capataz delivering short weight was to be jailed immediately. The losses in convoy had become serious at this time, in part by the fault of Marsden who despatched convoys from Albuquerque with the goods unweighed so that the muleteers "were not bound to deliver by weight when they did not receive it by the same rule"²², as Routh explained, and so could steal as much as they liked without its being chargeable to them at the end of the journey. In defence of the muleteers it seems clear that they were not to blame for all the deficiencies. By the 6th January, Hill was writing about the unfed Portuguese troops plundering the mule trains²³. Had this been the sole reason for the losses however and was known at Headquarters on the 6th, the muleteers would hardly have remained the only villains in the commissariat correspondence as late as the 12th. The shoes mentioned above were hardly likely to have been plundered by starving soldiers, and there seems no reason to doubt the commissaries' opinion that much of the loss was occasioned by dishonesty among the muleteers.

It seems that the most serious losses occurred from the mules arriving at the army between the 7th and 12th of January inclusive. From such figures as survive it appears that the convoys of unweighed goods often arrived between thirty and forty per cent short. The effect of these losses was probably not to deprive the troops but to reduce the reserve in hand, thus effectively cancelling the possibility of offensive operations had Hill wished to undertake any. On the 11th Routh admitted "we have in consequence (of the losses in mule convoy) only one day's bread now with the troops"²⁴. On the 13th Hill retired, in accordance with Wellington's orders, to take up a new station further to the north astride the Tagus. The Albuquerque depot

21. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 25. Wilkinson to Fanton, 11th January 1812.

22. Ibid No 23. Routh to Marsden, 11th January 1812.

23. B.M. Add Mss 35059 f 503. Hill to Wellington, 6th January 1812.

24. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 23. Routh to Marsden, 11th January 1812, footnote.

was broken up on the 16th and 17th as the army was moving towards the depots of Portalegre and Niza and the campaign, although a winter operation, straightforward from the military and commissariat points of view along a single line of advance against an outnumbered enemy, ended with the return of the army to Portugal.

The available statistics enable us to investigate more closely the means adopted for the supply of the troops. From the figures for the receipts and issues of Mr Marsden during the month following the 25th December 1811, there may be calculated an approximation to the quantity of stores that passed through Albuquerque up to the 16th January when the troops returned to the Guadiana. On the basis that the British supplied portion of Hill's force comprised 9,500 men with 2,000 horses, it appears that the bread supply was satisfactory, the meat supply was very insufficient and the alcohol and forage corn quantities were inadequate for the number of mouths to be fed. The bread supply was aided by captures about the extent of which there is some confusion. It is most likely that they amounted altogether to some 30/40,000 rations and not the 160,000 lbs of wheat besides an unspecified amount of biscuit mentioned by Oman²⁵. Between the 25th December 1811 and 16th January 1812 approximately 9,000 bread rations per day were provided through Albuquerque, excluding the captured stores. Taking these into account there was clearly enough to feed all the British supplied portion of Hill's force and leave a small surplus for the independent Portuguese. The same calculation regarding alcohol reveals a supply of only 7,000 rations daily, while the figure for forage corn is either 1,500 or 1,200 rations according to whether the allowance on this campaign was ten or twelve pounds per horse per day. The greatest deficiency is found in the meat supply, where only 4,000 rations per day were provided through Albuquerque, but since some cattle are known to have come directly

25. The principal source for the 160,000 lbs of wheat seems to be Despatches VIII p 520, Wellington to Liverpool, 9th January 1812, which doubtless inspired Oman and Sidney, Life of Lord Hill 1845 p 180. Wellington's assertion has no basis which can be discovered whereas all the other statements about the capture, though showing internal discrepancies, unite in presenting it as vastly smaller. Thus Despatches VIII p 511 Wellington to Graham, 6th January 1812 speaks of 600 fanegas (perhaps 40,000 lbs) captured at Merida and Almendralejo and N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 13 Wilkinson to Marsden 4th January 1812 talks of 30,000 rations of wheat captured, which, at 1½lbs the unbaked ration, agree together quite well. Hill himself acknowledged the capture of 180 fanegas of wheat "besides a quantity of bread" at Merida alone, later reporting "a few stores" found at Almendralejo. His return of these latter is not among his papers, but nothing in his letters or subsequent memorandum suggests that the finds at Almendralejo were any bigger than those at Merida. B.M. Add Mss 35059 ff 489, 496 and 505. Hill to Wellington 30th December 1811, 2nd January 1812 and memorandum.

from Estremoz to the army this figure does not represent the whole supply, which was probably considerably more extensive.

This result accords with the policy we have already noticed (in chapter III) of giving preference to bread above the other articles of supply. The deficiencies of alcohol and meat should be regarded as being supplied by purchases in the locality either from inhabitants or small dealers. This is implied by Routh's anxiety on the 5th January over a delay in the forwarding of 20,000 dollars in specie²⁶, since supplies are the only expense which could not have waited ten days until the army's retirement, and it is confirmed by Hill on the 7th. "I have found the Spanish People well inclined & by no means unwilling to let us have what the enemy have left"²⁷. The shortfall of forage corn may have been similarly supplied but probably represented underfeeding of the horses. It may seem from these figures that the supply from the rear formed so considerable a part of the commissariat arrangements for this campaign that local supplies, while useful in a small way, could virtually have been, except by the independent Portuguese, dispensed with. The supply we have examined so far however has been the supply from Albuquerque, a depot especially instituted out of the usual depot pattern for the purpose of sustaining the advance of the troops. By no means all of the supplies forwarded from Albuquerque arrived thither from further in rear. Don Guillermo²⁸, already mentioned, appears from the extant receipts to have been the only local supplier to Albuquerque during this campaign but he supplied about a third of all provisions received there, 25% of the bread (as flour), 65% of the meat, 20% of the alcohol (all rum) and 45% of the forage corn. Thus without the assistance of the general locality the supply would have been quite inadequate, in spite of the increases in transport, which probably amounted to about 10% in animals²⁹ together with a number of carts unspecified but in excess of 20. The mixed nature of the supply provided by Routh appears to have caused neither surprise nor strategical inconvenience to Hill's Headquarters. Although worried at first lest he could not maintain his position at Almendralejo³⁰, Hill was able to do precisely what his orders

26. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 15, Routh to Marsden 5th January 1811(recte 1812).

27. B.M. Add Mss 35059 f 509. Hill to Wellington 7th January 1812.

28. Don Guillermo's full name was Guillermo Antonio Alexis.

29. It is not recorded how many mules the 2nd division and five British cavalry regiments employed prior to the campaign but by analogy with the practice in the northern army, about 1,500 would be a likely guess.

30. B.M. Add Mss 35059 f 496. Hill to Wellington 2nd January 1812. Shortage of forage corn was the problem Hill feared.

enjoined him to with the assistance of his commissariat. On the 3rd January we learn that "the general is as yet highly pleased"³¹, and though on the 6th Hill wrote that "the dreadful state of the weather the condition of the roads (which are daily becoming worse), and the consequent difficulty of getting up my supplies, render any further operations on my part impossible for the present..."³², he was able to maintain his position at Merida until ordered, for reasons unconnected with commissariat considerations, to retire, and no "further operations" were required of him. Additional evidence of the generally satisfactory conduct of commissariat business in this campaign is provided by the fact that Hill shortly afterwards recommended Routh for promotion, which was awarded on the 9th March. Thus it cannot be said that the, admittedly limited, ambitions of the operation were thwarted by difficulties of supply.

When thinking ahead to the major operation of 1812 neither Wellington nor Bisset doubted that it would involve a partial dependence upon local supplies. Wellington's worry was less that these might exist in insufficient quantities than that shortage of money might prevent the army receiving the benefit of them. "My friends in Castille..." wrote Wellington, "assure me that we shall not want provisions even before the harvest will be reaped... and that if we can pay for a part credit will be given us for the remainder. They have long given me hopes that we should be able to borrow money in Castille upon British securities..."

In case we should be able to maintain ourselves in Castille .. I have in contemplation other resources for drawing supplies from the country, and I shall at all events have our own magazines at Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo.

But with all these prospects I cannot reflect without shuddering upon the probability that we shall be distressed, nor upon the consequence which may result from our wanting money in the interior of Spain"³³. Not very long before Bisset had asserted the impossibility of an advance in the army's present financial state "Because, like (sic) Moses, we cannot with a wand

31. N.A.M. Acc 7701-36 A No 12. Routh to Marsden 3rd January 1811 (recte 1812)

32. Despatches VIII p 522. Hill to Wellington, 6th January 1812.

33. Despatches IX p 177, Wellington to Liverpool 26th May 1812.

strike what we want from the rocks"³⁴, and he seems also to have been worried about how much food was to be found in Spain where "In many places were you to give the Bank of England you could not get as much bread and meat as would supply 100 men without considerable previous arrangements"³⁵. The decision to undertake the campaign, naturally, was Wellington's, but on this occasion he was probably acting against the advice of his Commissary-General, or at least he would have been had Bisset been asked for his advice which may not have been the case³⁶. On the 18th May Bisset denied the advance to be possible: on the 10th June (three days before the army set out) he wrote of the move as a settled thing but repeated his previous apprehensions as the finances had not improved in the interim.

The events of the early part of the campaign, in the country that lay between Salamanca and the Douro, justified neither of these fears. The Salamanca region was not one of those places dreaded by Bisset where the Bank of England would have gone hungry. "The country through which we have marched from Salamanca", wrote William Warre, ADC to Marshal Beresford, "is extremely fertile and well-cultivated, producing abundance of corn of all descriptions, sometimes in one year for the consumption of three and this year the crops are remarkably fine..."³⁷ This observation is supported by many passing references in contemporary memoirs. Since the campaign opened in summer and the area of operations was so fertile, the cavalry were enabled to obtain barley from the fields and their supply mules were re-allocated among the infantry divisions. Bisset observed that 'commissariat Bills' (being the securities described in chapter IV as drafts) were used in payment for the barley taken from the fields, so evidently it proved possible to obtain supplies locally without the payment of ready money as well³⁸. The situation of the infantry regarding supplies may be observed through the surviving figures respecting the 6th division in this period, which figures are here presented graphically. The picture is complicated by two circumstances, first the very heavy losses suffered by this corps at Salamanca (which I have for convenience presented gradually, spread out between two points arbitrarily chosen shortly before and shortly after the 22nd July) and second the large reinforcement which renewed its strength at

34. B.M. Add Mss 57377, Bisset to Herries, 18th May 1812.

35. Ibid.

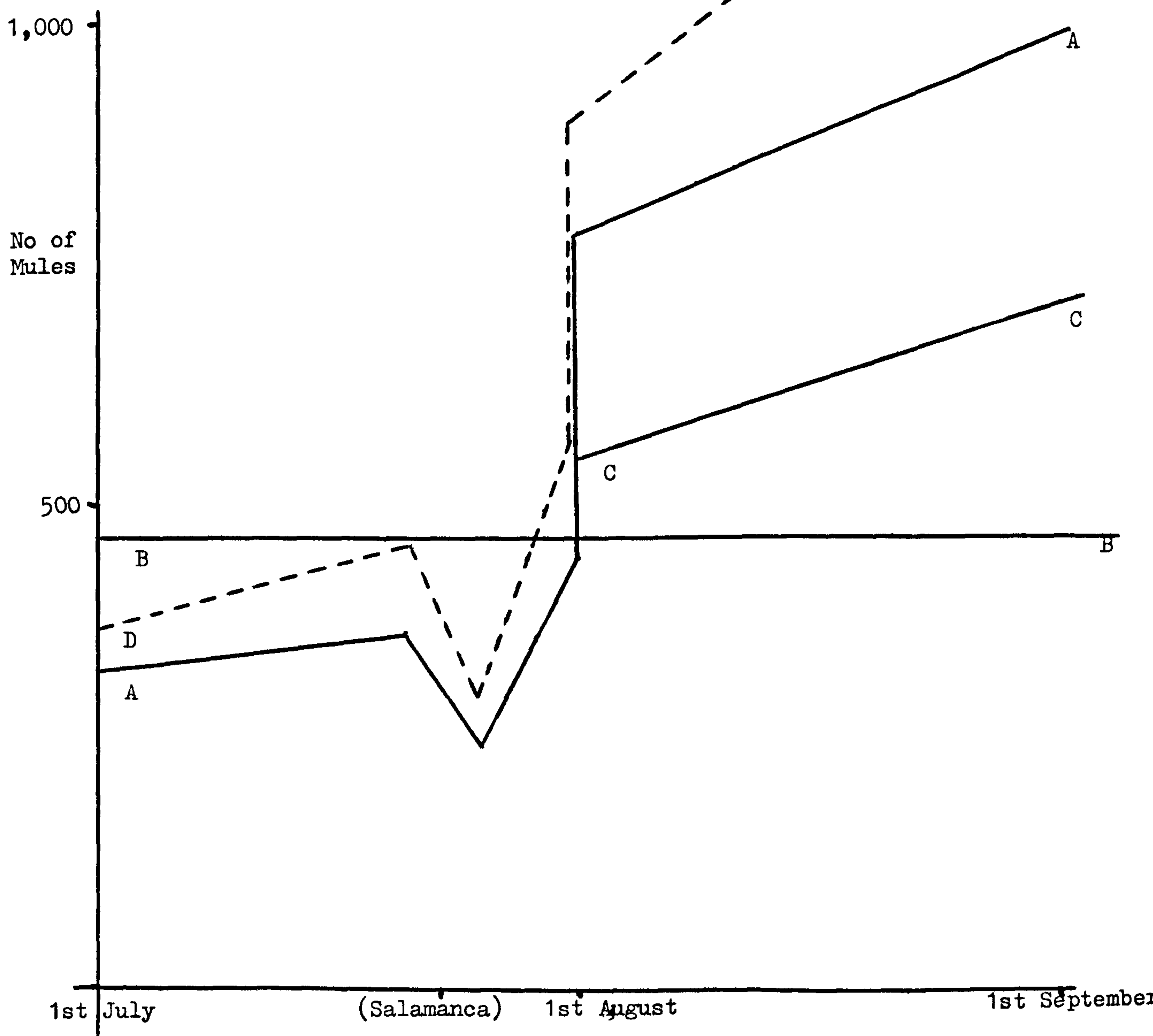
36. After all, six months before it had been Wellington giving Bisset advice. See the transport memorandum of 20th November 1811. Despatches VIII p 626.

37. W. Warre, Letters from the Peninsula ed. E. Warre, 1909, letter of 7th July 1812. See also Daniel pp 114 and 121.

38. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41, Bisset to Herries, 3rd July 1812.

THE SUPPLY TO THE 6th DIVISION, SUMMER 1812

per N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17892



AA denotes No. of mules required for supply.

BB denotes No. of mules available.

CC denotes No. of mules required for supply of biscuit only.

DD denotes No. of mules required for supply if they carry their own forage.

the beginning of August and is represented by the vertical turn of the graph. It should be emphasised that no intermediate point on the lines is necessarily significant as these are only filled in for ease of comprehension. From the graph it appears that while the troops were between Salamanca and the Douro their supply (line AA) was adequately provided, the turn around time to the depots varying from ten to twelve days (hence the upward slope of the line) for an average of 6,000 men³⁹. The upturn subsequent to the sharp dip in the graph caused by the loss of over 1,500 men at Salamanca represents the increasing distance from the frontier depots as the division marched in late July to Cuellar whence the round trip to the Portuguese border took from twenty to twenty five days. After the reinforcement to about 7,000 men the line slopes upwards to the end of August, but should probably be considered as subject to fluctuations between the low point indicated on August 1st and the high point at the end of the month as the mules' journey times at such a great distance appear to have varied. Since in August the number of mules available (line BB) was plainly below the requirement (line AA), I have added a lower line (line CC) representing the mule requirement if the alcohol supply were to be dispensed with, normally the case as we have seen when transport shortage dictated a reduction in the supply from the rear.

On the basis of these figures it appears that while it remained on the Douro and before reinforcement the 6th division was adequately supplied from Ciudad Rodrigo and Barca D'Alva by its own mules. After reinforcement however, at Cuellar, the mules could no longer have kept pace with the biscuit supply, let alone any other⁴⁰. From the returns of provisions in hand and the statements of transport activity it is apparent that the 6th division during August was not surviving solely on what the mules could bring forward since accessions of bread are recorded without any transport that might have brought them having returned from the rear. Its wine was mostly bought in the country from day to day. If the mule convoys were not adequate to the supply of the division at Cuellar during August, they could certainly not have been adequate at Burgos in September and October, and nor, unless the 6th division was unusually deficient in mule transport,

39. This figure is a compromise between the ration strength of the division at the end of June and the fighting strength at Salamanca according to Oman (actually from the morning state of 15th July 1812). The large discrepancy between these figures is largely explained by casualties at the taking of the Salamanca forts in late June.

40. The 6th was the only division of the army which fought at Salamanca not to proceed to Madrid in August.

were the other troops at Madrid and Burgos from August to October likely to have been able to subsist on biscuit from the frontier of Portugal. This argument would be undermined were it true that depots were drawn forward into Spain behind the troops and the distances between the army and its magazines was maintained in this way. While supplies were advanced into Spain and depots were established along the communications of the army both on the Burgos and Madrid roads, all these depots were for the convenience of detachments, convoys, hospitals or messengers and were not intended for the supply of the field army. Arevalo for example was issuing only 1,500 rations daily in mid-September "in consequence of all detachments halting at this place for orders"⁴¹. Among the intermediate depots only Salamanca was maintained to a degree at all sufficient to be a source of supply to the army's mules but it was only ever a partial resource. The instructions given D.C.G. Anderson stated that he was to be in a position to issue 8,000 rations daily besides maintaining a reserve magazine, "any excess of which (quantity) may be sent forward from Ciudad Rodrigo or that you may procure through the medium of the Intendente by purchase, or by contracts in existence to be afforded to the first divisional Transport of the day requiring loading"⁴². Salamanca was used intermittently by the divisions at Burgos and probably very rarely by those at Madrid, and must have helped lessen the great deficiency of supply which would otherwise have fallen upon the advanced troops. It is noticeable however that mules proceeding from the 6th division at Cuellar seem to have been no quicker returning from Salamanca than was normal for Ciudad Rodrigo. Altogether the amelioration produced in the position of the forward troops by the Salamanca depot cannot have been very great, since even under the demand only of the Burgos troops, it became drained far quicker than replenishment could arrive from Ciudad Rodrigo and probably under half of the supply to Burgos can have been made from it.

It seems reasonable to infer from the facts presented that the army at Madrid and Burgos faced a shortfall of bread arriving from the rear, and equally reasonable, in spite of Bisset's worries in May, to suppose this shortfall supplied by local purchase. This appears to have been the usual way of providing the bulk of the supply while the forces were on the move. D.C.G. Routh made a practice of compiling intelligence in advance about the

41. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17877 f 32 Price to Ogilvie, 14th September 1812.

42. Ibid No 17954 f 87. Instructions of 23rd August 1812.

resources and modes of production of areas in which it was possible he might be called upon to act. "This plan was acted upon in the Peninsular (sic), in the advance of Lord Hill's corps from Almendralejo to Aranjuez, by the route of Truxillo and Talavera, by the Tagus, where there was no depot, and the country itself much exhausted. By the information thus obtained every supply was procured on requisition in abundance"⁴³.

D.A.C.G. Dallas, senior commissary with Skerrett's force marching from Cadiz to Toledo in August and September 1812, spoke fluent Spanish and used this ability to enter into conversation with inhabitants and discover where they had hidden their provisions during the French occupation. Then he would reveal himself as a British commissary and appropriate what he wanted. He also pressed 100 carts and 300 mules to carry the food he extracted and was able by these means to ensure that, at least as far as Seville, his charges "were never without food during the whole march except the deficiency of one half day's ration"⁴⁴. Requisitions like these although easiest with only a small force to provide for⁴⁵ were also feasible for larger numbers. Regarding the march from Madrid to Burgos in September, Dalrymple wrote that much barley was procured from the country and also bread from right and left of the line of march equal to the consumption of the force. At the end of the letter he added that the biscuit mules "ultimately came up"⁴⁶. While under more normal circumstances the regular march of the mule brigades would have ensured at least the greater part of the bread supply from the rear, it is evident that the localities were able and willing to part with enough to remedy the deficiency.

It was seen in the case of the advance to Almendralejo that a fair proportion of the supplies collected by mules from the forward depots had not arrived there from the rear at all, but had been obtained on the spot from a contractor. This was also the case at Salamanca in 1812⁴⁷ where the various sources of supply are discussed in chapter III. Unfortunately good figures are lacking regarding the volume of supply from the rear to Salamanca. Biscuit and forage corn were the articles provided both from Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo leaving the alcohol supply to be obtained locally, as was the fresh bread issued to

43. Routh p 19.

44. A.B. Dallas, Incidents in the Life and Ministry of the Rev'd R.C. Dallas 1871 p 131.

45. Routh was feeding roughly 15,000 men and Dallas about 5,000.

46. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17960 f 9, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 13th September 1812.

47. Though there is no evidence that any part of Ciudad Rodrigo's stores were similarly provided it would be surprising in view of the number of contractors and would-be contractors in Castille if none of them had been.

the hospital and passing detachments. It appears that the greater part of the bread supply, in excess of what was required for the depot, did come from the rear and may have amounted to about 6,000 rations a day on average during September and October. Besides these supplies Sr Pessoa's contract (see chapter III) was intended to provide 5,000 rations daily for issue to the divisional mules and appears in fact to have amounted to about 4,000 biscuit rations a day. Altogether therefore Salamanca provisioned the main army to the extent of 10,000 rations a day. The remainder of its supplies had to be fetched in the autumn from Ciudad Rodrigo or made up on the spot, although a large convoy of supply carts did set out in September from the Portuguese border towards the Escorial⁴⁸. There is no evidence that this was a regular route for carts and this journey appears to have been an isolated occasion, probably undertaken for the purpose of stocking the depot near the Escorial from which the forces at Madrid drew three days provisions before their retreat.⁴⁹ The 454 carts which set out could have carried enough provisions for this purpose. No other evidence has emerged of carts carrying provisions other than those required for the daily issues at intermediate commissariat stations, being sent forward in the wake of the army, which was thus rendered dependent on its own means of transport. These, as we have seen, were inadequate to its maintenance either at Madrid or at Burgos, and the deficiency was made good by local purchase at the divisions with some contracts or larger scale purchase agreements concluded at Headquarters.⁵⁰

From the picture so far presented it will seem that the British army in the summer and autumn of 1812 was enjoying the best of both worlds. It was secured in case of retreat and partly supplied by large magazines in rear and yet it was enabled to make grand movements by its ability to draw on local resources, for short periods at least exclusively of any supply from its depots. In fact its power to continue in this happy situation was limited in two respects, regarding both of which time was beginning to run short by September 1812. First, such an expensive system both of purchase and transport could not function indefinitely upon credit. "If our credit.

48. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17954 f 70.

49. Dallas p 135 and Routh p 19.

50. Supplementary Despatches VII p 430 Sydenham to Wellesley 28th September 1812, includes a passage which reveals the importance of local resources at Burgos.

were not better we should certainly starve"⁵¹, Wellington had written in July, and later in the year the accumulation of debts was beginning to damage this credit. Early signs of diminishing confidence may be seen in the mutiny of some muleteers in August (see chapter V) and in the (denied) request of the Salamanca contractor Pessoa to be paid in Bills on London rather than Headquarters or Lisbon⁵². Later the same supplier threatened to end his contract unless he was paid and the best Kennedy could do was to offer 10,000 dollars if that should be sufficient to induce him to continue⁵³. Another supplier, Don Francisco Lopez, owned a stock of shoes of which the department was at this time in want but refused to part with them except for ready money⁵⁴. The overall reduction in the army's creditworthiness by the end of the campaign, evident in any case from the depreciation of commissariat drafts and the adoption of the 'half and half' system discussed in chapter IV, may be seen from a later letter referring to conditions imposed (and obviously not met) by the meat dealers: "There are demands on the Com't for meat supplies, under particular & stipulated engagements of prompt payment..."⁵⁵ The modest resurgence taking place in the last four months of the year in the sums of money arriving from England must have helped to delay this process but was not large enough to halt it and by early November the need for cash was so desperate as to induce Kennedy to introduce his controversial new money raising scheme. How long operations might have been sustained against the background of worsening public confidence cannot be said. Evidently Kennedy's opinion was that the army was close to bankruptcy by the close of the campaign and, even granting his new measure, the saving in expenditure brought about by the dispersal of the troops into winter quarters must have been most timely.

The second factor limiting the commissariat's power to continue the supply to the troops as before, even more inevitable than the accumulation of debt, was the approach of winter. Winter brought bad weather which affected the roads and slowed transport besides damaging supplies in transit. More important still, winter brought to an end the local supply of forage corn upon which the horses and mules had depended in the autumn. This meant

51. Despatches IX p 289. Wellington to Stuart 15th July 1812.

52. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 22080 f 135. Dalrymple to Ogilvie 7th September 1812.

53. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17879 f 40, Kennedy to Ogilvie 2nd November 1812.

54. Ibid No 17891 f 67 Cairns to Ogilvie 16th October 1812.

55. B.M. Add Mss 57393 f 77. Extract from an anonymous letter to Messrs Lyne Hathorn & Roberts dated Lisbon 19th June 1813.

that more supplies from the rear were called for to accommodate the cavalry and artillery at the same time as the mule brigades could carry less since they were having also to carry their own corn. The enormous difference this made to the mule system is illustrated by the line DD on the graph presented earlier, showing the increased number of mules required for the same service if they had to feed themselves as well as their unit. Naturally the effect of this was most felt at the greatest distance from the depot⁵⁶. By the beginning of October the department was already taking steps to guard against shortage of corn, and Wellington ordered the depot for the cavalry to be moved forward from Salamanca to Arevalo and stocked immediately with ten to fifteen thousand fanegas (55/80,000 rations) of corn. Dalrymple, communicating this order to Ogilvie, added that he should buy as much forage corn as possible since with the onset of winter there would certainly be a shortage⁵⁷. Thomas Price, in charge of the Arevalo depot, found, despite the help of an officer loaned him by the Intendente to enforce his requisition, that "this province is much exhausted, nothing can be procured without money"⁵⁸. He hoped for better results from his efforts round Rueda and Avila whither he had sent agents to collect corn, but he had not been able to hire any mules for its transport. In the event Price cannot have had enough time to assemble much since the retreat of the army made it necessary, little more than a week after he had begun to look forward to the arrival of some corn, to carry back to Salamanca what had been gathered already at Arevalo and Fuente Dano.

Although so soon after the harvest it must have been possible to collect stores of forage corn the combination of the short time the department was given for its preparations, the lack of ready money, the credit decline and the difficulty of finding transport, makes it unlikely that what was provided came anywhere near the 20,000 forage rations a day stated by Kennedy to be necessary. Indeed the provisioning of the men on the retreat must have been similar to the manner we have already seen employed to sustain movements in

56. This is a hypothetical line in its context since in July and August it would not have been necessary for the mules to have carried corn for themselves. It illustrates the impossibility of the same operation being undertaken in January. See again Despatches VIII p 626. Memorandum of 20th November 1811.

57. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17960 Dalrymple to Ogilvie 3rd October 1812.

58. Ibid No 17927 Price to Ogilvie 11th November 1812.

the earlier part of the year. Although on the 31st October Kennedy sent to Salamanca the news that he could buy nothing as the Spaniards were eating everything that could be found and that he needed 70,000 rations per day⁵⁹, it seems most unlikely that they were forthcoming. His previous attempt to have biscuit sent forward to the army had been spoilt by the weather which had soaked and virtually ruined four convoys of biscuit between Ciudad Rodrigo and Salamanca, and the depot at the latter place had run so low that no divisional mules could be supplied there on October 25th. The 70,000 rations must have been intended to supply Hill's force coming from Madrid as well as Wellington's retiring from Burgos, but Hill plainly did not receive the benefit of them as his senior commissary, D.C.G. Aylmer, wrote in November that "we have not had the advantages of drawing upon depots for some time past"⁶⁰, and asked for a depot supply of biscuit. Even the San Christobal position, where with the combination of the supplies accumulated at Salamanca and the much shorter trip to Ciudad Rodrigo or Almeida for the divisional mules it should have been possible for at least the most important supplies to be fetched from the rear, would have proved too far advanced for the department to have supported because the border depots by November were themselves being denuded as the enthusiasm of the carters within Portugal and the speed at which they travelled diminished with the approach of winter⁶¹. Shortly after the final retreat of the army hurried measures were being introduced to re-stock the depot at Almeida, and there was the suggestion that the divisional mules might themselves make the journey to San Sebrao or Quinta dos Fulhos, easing the pressure on the cart convoys⁶².

The retreat and conclusion of the campaign of 1812 was thus attended with at least as much commissariat as military necessity. New measures were at once resorted to with regard to the supplies of money and meat and the divisions were distributed into quarters close to the Douro or Mondego in order to rest and preserve all forms of transport. Yet despite these urgent steps it cannot be suggested that Wellington's retreat was caused by a shortage of supply since excellent military reasons existed for it and indeed no

59. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17879 f 46, Kennedy to Ogilvie 31st October 1812.

60. Ibid No 17909 f 55, Aylmer to Ogilvie 17th November 1812.

61. Almeida's disposable supplies excluded a permanent stock of at least 150,000 lbs of flour, which in the event was not touched, so by drawing upon these supplies its role as a forward depot could have been maintained a while longer if necessary.

62. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17936, St Remy to Ogilvie 22nd November 1812.

shortage appears to have existed before the date when the retreat was made. Concern for commissariat matters can be detected in some of the larger decisions of the campaign. Wellington was for a while undecided whether, after his capture of the frontier fortresses, he should undertake the re-conquest of Andalucia or an advance into Castille, and it cannot be entirely coincidental that his ultimate choice was for the operation on the Douro, far closer to his nearest river depots than an attack upon Seville would have been. Similarly after the fall of Madrid, the choice between opening further operations against the main French armies to the south or marching on Burgos must have been heavily weighted in favour of the latter, since Burgos was not much further from his border depots than Madrid, while any advance beyond the Tagus would both have extended the army's supply line and carried it into thinly populated territory. It is possible too that the difficulty already noticed in getting supplies forward from Salamanca at the end of October was a factor in Wellington's decision to unite his forces behind the Tormes rather than further forward near Arevalo as he had initially preferred. On the other hand it should be remembered that the advance initially was undertaken in defiance of calculation, with optimistic trust in the power of the locality to provide and credit to procure, so that any attempt to explain the course of events either as being dictated by considerations of supply or as a triumph of prior organisation would be unsuccessful. Equally nothing can be stated with certainty about the speculative possibility that supposes Wellington, either from the capture of Burgos or from a successful battle in Castille late in the year, to have been under no necessity to abandon the country between Portugal and the Douro or even Madrid itself. Could the army have been sustained during the winter in Spain? Impossible to tell, but it is not pushing speculation too far to say that, if so, the continued expense and wear and tear on transport in so doing would surely have precluded any great effort in the following year. It is to that effort that we now turn.

In contrast to the attitude in 1812, the campaign of 1813 was carefully prepared on the commissariat side, and this is discernible from the arrangements even before the army came into range of supplies from the north Spanish coastline. The initial march of the main army was prepared by the establishment at Miranda and Mirandela of depots from which the troops drew three days rations as they passed through towards Spain. The advance to Vitoria, like the marches of summer 1812, was chiefly supplied from the country. "During our movements," wrote Graham, "our troops depended on

the country for provisions. The villages procured us bread in plenty and we had brought live bullocks on with us from Portugal; many hundreds however died on the way. Rum was brought by mules along with us, but of this we required little, as the country produced excellent wine... Our horses fared the worst, as we could not bring hay and corn with us. These were obliged to live upon the barley oats & wheat, all green in the ear, which we found in the fields"⁶³. Head at the 3rd division relates a similar experience⁶⁴, and the perusal of A.C.G. Strachan's cash book for the period of the advance shows, from the volume of payments for supplies, that the cavalry lived in the same style⁶⁵. Nonetheless there were important differences between this march and the movements of 1812. For one thing, the reserve supply was no longer provided by the coming and going of mules between the divisions and the frontier depots, but provided on mules and carts which followed the army like a moving depot. On this occasion too, it not being intended that the army should retire again after moving forward, depots once passed were drawn forward as best could be managed. Thus the stores at Miranda and Braganza after the divisions had left were carted on during June to Alcanizes and thence to Palencia where a major bakery for biscuit was established⁶⁶. These provisions, many of which were obtained originally in the locality of the depot which despatched them forward, were of course well in rear of the army. The main bulk of the supplies from Portugal were arriving at Toro and Palencia at the end of June and for most of July, at which time the main army was already settling into positions in the Pyrenees, and the Braganza and Alcanizes depots were not finally broken up until the last days of July. The convoys following the army were however only intended as an eventual reserve and not to provide daily consumption, so the pace of the advance did not need to be accommodated to them.

The other important difference between the method of supply used in 1813 and that of 1812 was in respect of payments. The army's financial state was more healthy in 1813, and not only had a good many of the old debts of 1812 been paid off before the new campaign began but it also proved possible to maintain credit better by paying at an earlier date for supplies received

63. Graham p 53.

64. Head pp 283-7.

65. P.R.O. W.O. 62/18. Cash book of Assistant Commissary-General Strachan.

66. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16930 ff 122 & 126. Kennedy to Ogilvie, 11th and 3rd June respectively, 1813.

from the country. It seems likely, though it cannot be demonstrated for certain, that the field commissaries had more money in June and July 1813 and so had to issue fewer drafts than in 1812. Both Graham and Larpent mention the fact that gold was paid for supplies bought along the line of march⁶⁷, and a commissary accompanying the 16th Light Dragoons paid ready money for some barley at Tavora already collected in response to a requisition, which suggests that cash was not in such short supply as usual⁶⁸. It was not only the greater availability of cash however which helped in prolonging the British army's credit. Strachan's cash book shows that he received 891 dollars in cash during July, but this represented a mere 6% of his total expenditure in the month. More significant than any increased volume of cash payments was Ogilvie's mission of August to pay the army's debts in the neighbourhood of Villa Caya and Medina de Pomar. The drafts he honoured dated from June and appear from the quantities stated to represent a great part of what the army must have purchased in the region⁶⁹. Their payment close to the army and at such an early date after their issue was obviously intended to increase confidence in the department's ability to pay, thereby both reducing the discount obtained by speculators in the army's debts and encouraging contractors and inhabitants to provide their supplies to the commissariat at reasonable prices. To what extent this measure achieved these results it is impossible to tell. Such prompt settlement could not subsequently be kept up, and by early 1814 the army was experiencing another liquidity crisis though of shorter duration than that of 1812. The attempt nonetheless demonstrates the intention to improve upon the methods of the previous year and the priority given to payments for supplies bought locally over those for transport, since the mule owners appear to have benefited not at all after the start of operations, from the easing of the financial situation.

The next important novelty among the commissariat arrangements for 1813 was of course the directing of sea-borne supplies to the north Spanish coast. The earliest such shipments arrived at Santander in the first week of July,

67. Graham p 53 and Larpent I, Castrogoes 12th June 1813.

68. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17907 f 180, Johnstone to Ogilvie 27th May 1813.

69. Ibid No 17915 f 54. The amounts of meat and alcohol paid for are trivial but the quantities of bread (mostly as wheat) and green forage amount to about 35,000 and 5,000 rations per day respectively.

though mules from the army had been despatched to that place and loaded there with flour locally acquired as early as June 25th⁷⁰. Thereafter the supplies arrived very rapidly and by the 17th July, Ogilvie reported that over three weeks' bread rations for 60,000 men had been accumulated at Santander at Passages or at sea between the two⁷¹. Most of the sea-borne supplies arriving at Santander were directed on by sea to Passages or Bilbao, but there also existed a land route through Villa Caya to Vitoria and Tolosa, used by about one ration in every ten. At Villa Caya this route coincided with that followed by the supplies carted forward from Portugal. These, whether from the old depots of Portugal north of the Douro or from the direction of Salamanca, generally passed through Palencia, thence north to Reinosa and then across the mountains to Villa Caya. Both Reinosa and Villa Caya were substantial depots, each of which was intended to hold a reserve of a quarter of a million biscuit rations⁷². This route is curious in that it avoids the main road through Burgos to the Pyrenees, selecting instead a longer way round over more mountainous country in the region of Reinosa. The intention cannot have been to by-pass Burgos, since the French destruction and evacuation of the place was known eight days before Kennedy issued the order establishing the Reinosa depot. The most likely conclusion is that Wellington proposed, if driven away from San Sebastian and Pamplona, to retreat into the mountains near Santander rather than back into Portugal which would have meant abandoning his new sea communication. The land route from Portugal was only important during the transitional period of July and August⁷³ when the depots formed to assist the early advance were being broken up and sent forward, and even during this period it was much less important than the routes by sea where ships from Lisbon, Oporto, Cork, Liverpool and London all converged upon Santander and Passages. About one sixth of the bread supply reaching the army in these months came overland, although more served to establish the reserve quantities already mentioned. Provisions were collected by the divisional mules directly from Passages and Tolosa, or from Villa Caya and Bilbao in the case of the cavalry quartered in the Ebro valley for greater

70. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16930 f 86, Ogilvie to Kennedy 25th June 1813. A small vessel carrying 200 barrels of flour had arrived from Cadiz before this date.

71. Ibid No 17936 f 104, Ogilvie to Herries 17th July 1813.

72. Ibid No 17955 f 56. The Commissariat Car Train under Mr Laidley operated on the road between Palencia and Reinosa.

73. It was used by cattle throughout the war, but not much by other supplies after August.

ease of foraging, and in this new depot system the army was well established by the middle of July, after barely seven weeks of more improvised methods since leaving Portugal.

From autumn 1813 until the end of the war, the army depended upon the coast for the bulk of its supplies of bread and corn. These were provided by the mule brigades proceeding on their round trips to the coastal depots. Shortfalls in the supply, even of bread, nonetheless occurred, partly from delays in sending forward provisions from Passages and Santander to the new port depots of St. Jean de Luz, Socoa and Renteria, and partly because it was still difficult to provide the divisions with enough mules to keep up the supply. In December a shortage of corn at the depots caused difficulty keeping the mules fed and led to delays in their journeying. Cuming at the 7th division complained that one of his mule brigades waited twenty two days for corn at Passages and had in the end to be content with biscuit after wasting so much time better spent on the march⁷⁴. Even when such delays were not occasioned many divisions could not keep up their own supply, as Head pointed out on December 20th saying that he had enough mules to carry five days provisions but that they had a six day round trip to their depots, with the result that either the mules' forage or the bread supply to the 3rd division had to fall short⁷⁵. When the division moved from Itzatzu to Hasparren, it acquired a few more animals but the round trip now lasted eight days and the mule brigades were even less able to keep up the full supply. The 4th division near Ustaritz and the 6th and 7th divisions were both also short of the requisite number of mules in January and February⁷⁶. One recourse of the field commissary with insufficient transport (apart from the temporary **expedient** of borrowing from his colleagues) was to a reserve at Headquarters which appears to have held limited quantities of bread and meat in this period, but this could only occasionally be drawn upon. Despite help from Headquarters, which might arrive directly or via the coordinating commissary for the centre divisions, the 3rd division was reduced to half rations of biscuit in late December and early January and this must have been the case with other units also, whose transport resources were no better, particularly those troops on the right of the line, furthest from the sea.

74. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17955, Cuming to Ogilvie 21st December 1813.

75. Ibid No 17875 f 110, Head to Ogilvie 20th December 1813.

76. Statements of mule strengths can be found in N.A.M. Acc 7512-124, N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17879 f 25 seq. and No 17915 f 7 seq.

The activities of contractors, both local like the Maire of Hasparren and more frequently Spanish or Portuguese employing their own means of transport to bring supplies forward to the army, covered the bulk of the deficiencies in the supply provided from the coast. Although some of the hitches in the coastal supply were inevitable being caused by bad weather, most of the problems arose from shortage of transport and this in turn resulted from shortage of money. In the agreement of 22nd January 1814 with the mule owners the best that could be promised was that occasional part payments in Treasury Bills would be made in the new year and drafts regularly provided at the end of every month⁷⁷. Although many suppliers were also kept waiting for their money⁷⁸, it appears that priority was given to payments for supplies over payments for transport. When cash was short, as it was at the turn of the year, deficiencies produced by transport shortage had to be made up by purchases from contractors since less would be provided directly from the locality on credit. When cash became slightly more plentiful, as in February and March of 1814, every effort was made to break away from middlemen and buy the resources of the neighbourhood. The active operations of the last two months of the war were supported in the same way as those of the previous two years had been, partly from the locality direct (with the aid of captured magazines which provided large quantities of forage) and partly by the attenuated mule brigades, which drew upon St. Jean de Luz but also upon an especially assembled depot at Ustaritz⁷⁹ and a captured magazine at Mont de Marsan. The lull in Wellington's operations until mid-February of 1814 may no doubt be partly explained by the poor winter weather, but must also have owed something to the shortage of ready money so important initially in obtaining the confidence of the locals. Certainly the renewal of the offensive coincided with a slight easing of the financial situation, noticed by Larpent, and signalled by an order from Wellington fixing the rate

77. The capatazes however were to be paid regularly in coin. There was little market for Treasury Bills in the Pyrenees. See Larpent II p 137 and N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17876 f 52.

78. When Ogilvie wrote to Dalrymple about a man who was, in desperation, demanding payment in bullock hides, the Commissary-General replied "I have a number of applicants of this description, whom I cannot satisfy..." N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 16930 Ogilvie to Dalrymple, 19th January 1814.

79. A measure of the difficulty of supplying the troops on the Nive is that the Ustaritz depot, intended to be a reserve against the army's advance, had to be used to augment the day to day consumption of the centre divisions in January and February.

at which currency should pass in transactions⁸⁰. The fact that the war ended in April 1814 conceals the dangerous cross-roads whither two years of regular field operations had brought the army. The dwindling mule brigades needed the expense of large sums to restore them to the size and efficiency of 1812, and yet the appropriation of money to this service would have hampered the local collection of supplies and tied the army down to its depots on the coast. On the other hand to allow the mule transport to run down was to place an entire dependence upon the country and court the unpopularity that extensive requisitions were bound to produce. Wellington's operations after the battle of Vitoria have always been regarded as cautious on the level of strategy, yet from the commissariat viewpoint they appear boldly calculated upon the assumption that the war would end before the winter of 1814 by which time a fresh accumulation of debt⁸¹, even greater than that of winter 1812 must again have threatened the collapse of credit and the bankruptcy of the army, this time upon hostile soil.

80. Larpent II pp 193/4 and N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17928 f 40, James Laidley to Ogilvie, 2nd February 1814.

81. As from the 22nd January 1814, the army's overall debt was no longer diminishing as a result of operations at Lisbon. See P.R.O. W.O. 57/44, Kennedy to Herries 5th May 1814.

CHAPTER VII : The Limitations of Wellington's System of Commissariat and its Effect Upon Strategy.

It is intended in this chapter to trace further the relationship between commissariat affairs and strategy along the lines stated in chapter I and also to draw conclusions about the relative merits of the British and French systems. First it may be as well to dispose of one final question disputed in the Peninsular literature, that of the competence or otherwise of the commissariat officers in the exercise of their duties.¹ While examples of dishonesty, negligence and stupidity have been cited in previous pages it should be apparent that in general the commissaries did a difficult and tiring duty with great success. The ammunition most often used against the department in this regard is the alleged dissatisfaction of General officers, and Wellington in particular, with the way the commissaries discharged their duties, but it must be pointed out that relations between the commissariat and the Generals were not so bad as is sometimes implied. Generals, particularly those commanding cavalry, were of course critical on occasion and Wellington's grumbles are common knowledge (though his complaints about the commissariat seem to me no worse than his similar generalised animadversions upon other categories of person: the regimental officers for example as far as administration and 'interior economy' were concerned, or the moral qualities of the rank and file) but not only do almost all criticisms date from 1809/10 when most commissaries must still have been learning their jobs but some of the complaints reflect more the soldier being hard to please than the commissary being culpable. Colonel Le Mesurier for example complained when a flock of ewes was issued to his regiment and returned half of them to the commissariat as inferior rations to be shared equally among the brigade. "I must add," he explained, "that the flesh of Weathers (sic) is not open to the objection urged against ewes but doubtless beef is preferable to either as being more nutritious"². There exists besides the complaints a considerable body of complimentary literature. Both Dalhousie and Picton took the trouble to write to the Commissary in Chief in favour of their divisional commissaries, while Craufurd, after some

1. See Oman, Wellington's Army pp 318/9, for a guarded compliment to the commissaries. Ward, op. cit. pp 71/2 is disparaging about the quality of many of the department's recruits but does not make this a charge against the Peninsular staff. A. Brett-James, Life in Wellington's Army 1972 p 110, concludes that "verdicts differ on their zeal and competence".

2. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17908 f 57, Le Mesurier to Ogilvie, 13th August 1810.

irascible moments in 1810, was pronounced to be "much more temperate than formerly and very well satisfied with Mr Purcell's exertions(sic)"³. Ogilvie was complimented by several generals, notably Stewart, Dalhousie and Wellington himself, and O'Meara was praised by General Cooke at Cadiz. These examples could be multiplied⁴, indeed other compliments to commissaries have already appeared in the text, and there seems to be little justification for the view that the generals habitually regarded their commissaries either as inept or as civilian inferiors in a soldier's world.

It has appeared from the contents of the three chapters preceding number VI and dealing successively with the basic elements of the commissariat system that little of a rigid law of commissariat practice existed once questions of internal organisation and accounting are left behind. All the food supply, although the different rations display different degrees of dependence upon the various methods, was provided by such a mixture of large scale rear purchases, smaller local contracts and local purchases that there may seem little regular about it beyond the desire to hold plentiful food in reserve and enough food at the front to keep the men supplied for the next few days. Some generalisations can however be made regarding the system of supplying food. In the first place permanent depots or areas having a regular need to supply a limited number of rations very often took advantage of contracts to cover this element in the supply. Thus troops in or around Lisbon were supplied through a contract with Sampaio made in 1808 by D.C.G. Rawlings and still in force in 1813⁵. The existence of such a contract to meet the regular needs of supply has also been seen at Salamanca during 1812. A further regular feature of the supply system was the intake of local provisions at the forward depots which were more than a few days' march from the river unloading points. Apart from Salamanca in 1812, and Albuquerque during its brief existence as a depot early in that year, this element in the supply at Portalegre and Almeida in 1810 has already been demonstrated and the depots at Mirandela and Alcanizes, established to support the advance of spring 1813, also drew in supplies from their localities. The relative importance of these sources of supply depended upon the whereabouts of the troops. When the divisions were close to the

3. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17908 f 22. Letter to Ogilvie, 27th May 1810.

4. Le Marchant's good opinion of Tupper Carey may be of interest as coming from a cavalry commander, and one not inclined to suffer fools gladly. R.H. Thoumine, Scientific Soldier, 1968, pp 155/6.

5. P.R.O. W.O. 57/43, Kennedy to Herries, 13th January 1813.

rivers the need for purchases at the forward depots was reduced, and local provisions would be obtained by the brigade commissaries without passing through the depots at all. Meat, long forage and alcohol were the supplies most often procured in this way though, particularly when the unit expected to remain stationary for some time, small local contracts for soft bread to vary the regular biscuit allowance were not uncommon. The cantonments in the Pyrenees in the autumn and winter of 1813/14 present comprehensive examples of the units themselves taking over the collecting role of forward depots, though since the immediate locality in the mountains was sparsely provided with supplies, this business was normally done through contractors or middlemen. When the troops were advanced beyond their forward depots these became again important buyers of local produce, while if the army was moving for several days it would need to find a good many of its provisions along its line of march.

Thus either the forward depots or the units themselves, or both, provided a part of the supply, though often only a small part when the troops were close to (say within fifty miles of) the up-river depots. This proportion may be called the local supply. The meat ration is exceptional here since it did not depend on the transport system for its supply from the rear and since a change in its mode of provision took place during the war, with the result that between spring 1812 and autumn 1813, campaigning or not, the army received its meat mainly from the rear, while at other times the local supply probably accounted for over a half of the meat issued. Except under rare circumstances, as in the lines of Torres Vedras, when the army was very far withdrawn, part of the alcohol supply was locally provided. The local proportion probably varied between about a third (Ashworth's brigade's experience in early 1812, at a normal distance from the depots and after the arrival of the first large rum shipments) and the whole, as in central Spain in 1812, and was doubtless on average higher in 1809/11 than afterwards when a more regular spirit supply was being imported. Bread and forage were the supplies most extensively provided from the rear, with the proviso that green or long forage was almost entirely provided locally and bearing in mind that cavalry cantonments had always to be withdrawn behind the infantry ones to keep up the forage corn supply from the rear. When ~~cantonned~~ the horses drew their corn mainly from the supply line from 1810 onwards, but when in advance (which they were less often than the infantry) they could eat locally during summer and autumn or go hungry in the other seasons to the extent of three quarters or more of their rations. Bread was obtained locally, perhaps to the extent of a third

of the supply, or a half decreasing to a third between 1809 and autumn 1811, except during exceptional movements (like the attempted relief of Badajoz in spring 1811) when the proportion must have been greater. From late 1811 onwards the troops, unless far beyond the forward depots, could draw nearly all of their bread from the rear supply line⁶. The limits of this bread supply under active conditions were shown in chapter VI. The troops at Burgos must have had about half of their supply provided from local sources, and the army on its advance in 1813 rather more than that.

Like the food supply, the provision of money also has the appearance of a succession of expedients. That cash should be provided either from home or by the efforts of British agents overseas was early found to be impossible and the Commissary-General instead needed to rely on methods of converting the credit of the British Treasury into cash in Portugal. The failure of this resource, added to the sums sent from England, to provide enough cash to meet the expenditure became evident during 1811, and the growth of commissariat indebtedness, assigned upon drafts, was a perpetual embarrassment thereafter, since the negotiation of drafts both adversely affected normal money raising operations at Lisbon and tended further to depress the department's credit in the Peninsula. The credit crisis looming in late 1812 was averted by the expedient of the 'half and half' scheme but this change of system was only a short term measure since its long term effect was to aggravate the depreciation of the drafts. Despite the increase in cash supplies from home in the period after autumn 1812 a further crisis must have followed the campaign of 1814 had it not been for the early conclusion of the war. As it was, the transport service was seriously affected by the need to use as much money as was available to pay French suppliers and conciliate local opinion, without the favour of which the invasion of France would have been impossible. It is therefore against the background of worsening credit that the operations of winter and spring 1813/14 as well as those of 1812 should be viewed. It will thus be seen that Wellington's refusal to provide more than partial supplies to his auxiliary Spanish forces was from economic necessity rather than calculation or principle and that his decision to let the transport system deteriorate rather than accumulate debts for supplies renders more intelligible the wide distribution of the army between Bordeaux, Bayonne and Toulouse when military arguments might have preferred the concentration of greater force against Soult's field army.

6. The contracts for soft bread already mentioned were more for variety than necessity in 1812/13. See N.A.M. 7701-36 A No 55 Department Order of 16th April 1812.

An evolving system is more evident in the area of transport than elsewhere. In the course of 1810 there was the institution of the mule transport attached to each individual unit, and in 1809 legislative measures which governed the requisitioning and hire of carts. Both of these features of the system were subject to modification as circumstances changed. We have seen already that the cavalry mules were taken in the summer of 1812 for the benefit of the infantry divisions and it may be noticed also that while in the lines of Torres Vedras all the units appear to have been much reduced in transport capacity⁷, the mules being taken to carry provisions from Lisbon and the country south of the Tagus to reserve magazines in rear of the army. In general however the trend was to increase the mule transport with the divisions between 1810 and 1812/13, though by late 1813 the number of mules serving the troops was diminishing without being made up. The period of increase in the mule capacity saw a relative decline in the capacity of the cart transport. Before undertaking the operations of 1812 Wellington took steps to arrest this decrease, by improving the navigation of the Douro, by ordering the construction of new carts and by persuading the Portuguese Regency to issue the Transport Regulation of December 1811 which would, he hoped, make it easier to obtain carts from the country. The Commissariat Car Train proved useful during 1812, but the Regulation was not successful in preventing the diminishing of the cart transport in numbers and efficiency alike towards the autumn of the year. The effect of this may be seen in the campaign of 1812, when two thirds or more of the distance between the army and the river depots had to be traversed by the divisional mules and only one third by the country carts. The shifting of operations to the Pyrenees introduced an altered arrangement of transport, inasmuch as the forward units now sent their mules directly to the coastal depots and the cart stage in the journey was entirely omitted.⁸ Thus not only were the mule brigades with which Wellington entered France less efficient than those with which he had campaigned in Spain, but what had been a stage in his old transport system, albeit a slow and troublesome one, was missing, this preventing any movement of depots inland after the army. The only inland depots established behind the advance of 1814, excluding captures and those stocked entirely with local produce, were at St. Pée and Ustaritz, neither very far

7. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17886 f 3.

8. In spite of Frazer's reference to "small four-wheeled carriages drawn by little horses yoked like bullocks", (Frazer p 441) it does not appear that much cart transport was levied in France, either because little was available or because it could not be afforded.

from the coast nor very well positioned to support operations beyond Toulouse had they proved necessary. The movements of spring 1814 were thus very much dependent upon local purchases and on a continuing supply of money to enable them to be made⁹.

The importance to the commissariat of purely local resources has been clearly demonstrated. It has been seen successively that local manpower, provisions, commercial facilities and means of transport were all called into the service of the British army and that the commissaries, far from being merely administrators of a transporting and issuing system, were all required to be men of business as well, taking on staff, negotiating transactions and dealing with other business concerns. This is an aspect of commissariat duty which tends to be concealed behind the phrase 'depot system' so often applied to the activity of the Peninsular department. The British did indeed use a system of depots, but these were more complicated institutions than at first appears. Their obvious role, as intermediate stages where such supplies as made that journey halted between the coast and the army, was only one of their functions. Besides this they were repositories where the army's reserve supplies were held¹⁰, they were rationing points for detachments and they were centres of the cart transport system, responsible for requisitioning, working, supervising and paying vehicles required for army service. They were also commercial centres where supplies were bought and contracts entered into. This is plain to see at Lisbon and Oporto where cash was raised and supplies bought as well, but is also true of the inland depots whose contracting and purchasing activities have already been described. This commercial aspect of the commissariat duty is also clear in the activities of the field commissaries, all expected to buy and contract locally, while the same side of the work performed by the Commissary-General and his senior co-ordinating subordinates needs no illustration. Viewed in the light of this important commercial element in all commissariat duties the speculations of Wellington and Stuart in corn to be sold at Lisbon appear less extraordinary. D.C.G. O'Meara undertook a very similar venture when he sold flour from Cadiz

9. Captured magazines, though numerous in March and April 1814, were mostly of hay, straw or oats.

10. Comparatively small provision reserves were held in Portugal before 1811. From then onwards it was Wellington's policy to maintain three months' consumption of bread and forage corn, and this was increased for 1812 to six months in consequence of the British Government's decision to prohibit grain exports from the United Kingdom. Despatches VIII p 446, Wellington to Bisset, 17th December 1811.

in the needy parts of Murcia during 1812, applying the profit to the support of the commissariat at Cartagena¹¹. Here too is the justification for another fact which has struck many subsequent observers as bizarre, namely that the commissariat was subordinated to no military authority, being a Treasury sub-department. For a large scale business and commercial venture such an organisation seems not unnatural. Indeed had any effective method of training its employees been devised and acted upon, the Treasury might have well acquitted itself of its charge, despite the difficulties of dual responsibility it inevitably threw up, since it is hard to imagine a commissariat controlled by the Horse Guards receiving any useful instruction in finance and commercial techniques.

The other question arising out of what has been said about the commissariat's local dependence is regarding the supposed superiority of the British supply system over that of the French. If the British themselves 'lived off the country' to such an extent, it may be felt that their commissariat gave them no advantage over their opponents, who were adept at doing likewise, and therefore that the strategical implications of commissariat problems were similar for both armies. The difference between the British and French methods of supply however did not depend on the proportion of local resources each army employed but on the different ways they set about employing them. The British method did not go uncriticised in its own day. Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, submitted to the attention of Stuart and Wellington a reasoned memorandum which inquired if "it may be worth considering whether any useful hint can be derived from the system by which the French armies are subsisted, modifying it so as to strip it, as far as possible, of its injustice and oppression"¹². His idea was to pay magistrates in Bills on England for block requisitions which would, he felt, not only lessen the demand for cash on the spot but also reduce prices, since the magistrate "would always be able to obtain value (for the Bill) while an Individual of the lower class who may take a Bill to a small amount under the present system, is often unable to dispose of it at all, or at best at great loss, against which he will guard himself by an exorbitant price"¹³. A suggestion of similar practical tendency by Major-General Whittingham, though more concerned with military convenience than reducing cost, appears also to have

11. P.R.O. W.O. 57/41 Ross to Wellesley, 23rd March 1812, and O'Meara to Herries, 19th April 1812.

12. B.M. Add Mss 31236 Memorandum of 2nd September 1812.

13. Ibid.

been brought to Wellington's attention, shortly after Vansittart's idea.

Wellington's replies to both these memoranda show his appreciation that the true distinction between French and British methods lay deeper than the mere administration of requisitions. The French system depended upon the direct exercise of military force - "Let any person attend to the detail of a French operation of this description he will see the use of the bayonet in every part of it"¹⁴, as Wellington expressed it in his answer to Whittingham - while the British army was denied this sanction, partly because its state of discipline was not such as to enable it to behave so and remain under control and partly because the French as the 'de facto' government in the provinces they occupied could take as a kind of taxation while the British army "could not have this resource without depriving its Ally of it"¹⁵. For these practical reasons, quite apart from any consideration of whether it were the more effective policy, the British commissariat had to rely on transactions for the realisation of local resources. This method was more expensive than the French one and was flexibly utilised, as much force being diluted among the money as it was felt would not provoke hostility. The illustration of this is to be found in the different treatment accorded to the inhabitants of the three countries in which the British commissariat dealt. As is well known, every effort was made to conciliate the civilians of France. "I am always very willing to dispatch people the moment they bring their vales - knowing the benefit we reap from it - and am at the same time circumspect in the payment and often have paid them rather more than their certificates stated to prevent the smallest grumbling on their part"¹⁶, wrote the commissary at Villefranche in February 1814. The policy of generosity towards the demands of French inhabitants had earlier led Boyes to complain that "the whole of the wood which was cut down by the French army for Fascines etc appears to have become payable (sic) upon this division"¹⁷. In the attempt to conciliate, the British of course benefited from the obvious contrast between their behaviour and that of the French, and also from the

14. Despatches X p 366, Answer to Whittingham.

15. B.M. Add Mss 31236 Memorandum of 2nd September 1812, Wellington's marginal note.

16. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17928 f 40 James Laidley to Ogilvie, 2nd February 1814.

17. Ibid No 17934 f 73, Boyes to Ogilvie 19th December 1813. Boyes wrote from Vieux Mouguerre. Presumably the fascines he mentions were employed opposite Hill's troops on the right bank of the Nive a week or so before the date of the letter. See also Daniel p 344 for generous treatment of the locals in France.

pre-existence of regular channels of requisition¹⁸. The policy was calculated to impress and was evidently successful in this regard during the few closing months of the war.

In both Spain and Portugal less meticulous attention was paid to local feeling although the Spaniards were more warily treated than their neighbours. "I cannot over the heads of the Spanish authorities knock loudly at the doors of the several magistrates, as we do in Portugal"¹⁹, explained Ogilvie at Salamanca. Comparatively little coercion appears to have been exercised in Spain, though two examples of the forcible requisition and retention of carts cited in chapter V are in respect of Spaniards. Portugal however was another case. The political and economic power exercised by the British over the Portuguese government reflected itself not only in enactments, like the Transport Regulations mentioned earlier, designed to help the commissariat call out local resources but also in the attitude of the commissaries to the authorities with whom they had to deal²⁰. Ogilvie's remark already quoted is as much a statement of disrespect for the Portuguese authorities as of regard for the Spanish. Dalrymple referred to the Governor of Almeida as "a willing slave to our service"²¹. Junior members of the department naturally shared the attitude of their superiors. "The violence of the Commissariat towards the magistrates", wrote Charles Stuart answering the Conde de Funchal, "I am afraid is a true accusation"²². The worst specimen of it I have discovered was, curiously, the behaviour of the Portuguese junior clerk called Araujo, briefly stationed at Aviz in December 1810. The day after his arrival, his demand upon the Juiz de Fora for sacks not being met, he assembled all his muleteers and proceeded from house to house appropriating sacks, for which, and for taking a store of barley ordered by a Portuguese commissary, he was put under arrest by the Juiz and wrote indignantly to his superior, "I hope you send up here a guard of 20 men to examine the case

18. See for example the courteous reply of the juge de paix of Tartas to a requisition by Marshal Beresford, promising the required supply and politely pointing out the regular form of such a requisition for future reference. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17919 f 104.

19. Ibid No 17879 f 77, Ogilvie to Kennedy, 1st November 1812.

20. Feeling in the army too was often to despise the Portuguese for their compliance and to admire the Spaniards, while criticising them over numerous particularities, for their dignity.

21. Ibid No 17977, f 74, Dalrymple to Ogilvie, 24th September 1812.

22. B.M. Add Mss 31236 Stuart to Castlereagh, 17th October 1812.

and give a good lesson to the Juiz de Fora"²³. He was particularly irritated at having his pistol taken away, since "my pistol is a thing that I always use generally when I am in a town like this"²⁴, and continued to attend to the duties of his station from his house arrest, succeeding in further annoying the Juiz and even falling out with the muleteers over his practice of sending a soldier to take a mule whenever he wanted a letter delivered. If the complaints from magistrates are to be trusted, behaviour of equal violence, though perhaps less flamboyantly executed, was to be encountered in many parts of south Portugal in the same period.

The element of force, implicit in any case in the diplomatic relations between Britain and Portugal and sometimes explicit in the behaviour of British soldiers and officials²⁵, should not be regarded as an expression of irrational feeling. It was, in its general incidence, a rational phenomenon born of the experience that force was often effective where negotiation failed and that a certain degree of violence could be indulged in Portugal without provoking the adverse reaction that might be anticipated in Spain. The Araujo incident and the other complaints of December 1810 already referred to should not be considered without taking into account the alarmingly denuded state of the stores at Lisbon, which made it a matter of great urgency that large quantities of all kinds of grain be sent in from those portions of the country not occupied by the French. On the 30th November Kennedy had written home expressing the grave need for more supplies and it is reasonable to assume that an extra effort to obtain provisions was being made inland at the same time.²⁶ Similarly the forceful measures, discussed in chapter V, taken to produce transport at the end of 1812 were in response to urgent need. It is also surely significant that the greatest volume of complaints and reports of violence shown to the locals are in respect of forage, the only major item of supply generally inadequately provided by the department's best efforts. Altogether, the numerous exceptions especially in dealing with the Portuguese notwithstanding, it may be said that the policy of the British commissariat was to depend on

23. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17884, Araujo to Ogilvie, 27th December 1810.

24. Ibid. Araujo's attitude to his requisitioning duties may be seen in his own words. "The Juizes do not mind much the letters without some soldiers to deliver it as some have told me that have been (fried?) great many times and **they** do not mind much now; in short I can do more for getting transports in one day with a cople (sic) of men that (sic) writing a week to the Juiz". Ibid f 42.

25. Violence was of course often used upon the locals by Portuguese commissaries as well.

26. P.R.O. W.O. 57/38, Kennedy to Gordon, 30th November 1810.

transactions, force only being resorted to under the pressure of necessity when the attempt to transact had broken down. The French system on the other hand relied considerably on contributions in kind, both regulated and unregulated, and where they used cash to obtain the goods and services they required, the money itself was the product of an enforced contribution rather than of a commercial operation.

The word transaction has been used advisedly thus far to avoid giving the impression that all these dealings involved the use of money. A few, probably a very few, of them were settled with cash payments on the spot. A larger number were settled in cash upon the presentation of the receipt or other necessary voucher at Lisbon or Headquarters within the specified period of one month. A great many were assigned upon the drafts discussed in chapter IV and paid ultimately but only rarely to the original owner of the claim, these securities being commonly negotiated at an appropriate discount. The transactions involving the largest sums of money were those paid in Treasury Bills where the cash was paid over in London if at all, but the merchants holding bills on London might simply draw upon them in payment of other dealings and never see the money value of their holding at all. The basis of the British transactions system was thus not cash but credit. This fact accounts for the inability of the department to dispense with the services of middlemen, either in the shape of contractors or of speculators in commissariat drafts, since the local owners of supplies and transport were not able or prepared to deal on the basis of the extended credit that the British had to offer. It was accordingly necessary that there should be both a market in which small creditors could discount their claims upon the department, and an alternative means whereby their produce could reach the commissariat depots. The credit of the department in dealing with middlemen was ultimately as good as that of the British Treasury, because it was based largely upon its power to issue and sell Treasury Bills in unlimited quantities, and little upon the relatively small amounts of specie received from England. Chapter IV described the various efforts of the commissariat to convert this credit into cash and their partial success, sufficient to enable the department to keep an element of competition in their dealings with suppliers and on selected occasions to undertake considerable local purchases, but never enough to deny the contractors or speculators their place in the system.

The rival commissariat systems were to a great extent imposed upon the armies by wider circumstances. The French could not depend upon credit since Napoleonic France was not capable of sustaining by its own wealth the Emperor's military commitment of which the Peninsular War was only a part. The British could not resort to much use of military force for reasons already explained. Once adopted, the systems governed the general pattern of the war. The French were obliged to deploy their forces over wide areas since the armed force upon which they depended for their subsistence needed, as the Spaniards did not submit passively to their demands, to be exercised in person upon each locality. Force, while often effective in place of money to obtain supplies, was of more limited service in the acquiring of a transport system. That the British were able to maintain a fairly efficient system of transport, at least until the winter of 1813, while their opponents were not, is not however wholly a corollary of the transactions versus force distinction here being offered. After all, while the mule brigades served voluntarily for pay, the bulk of the British cart transport, although also paid, served because it was obliged by civil legislation and military threats to do so. The French were equally capable of exerting such pressure and did press carts and beasts into their service to carry ammunition and provisions along with the troops, but they were quite unable to convoy supplies from one area into another in the British manner since they would, apart from the difficulty of keeping the carters or muleteers at their work, have had no means of protecting from the guerrillas so many convoys on the march. Perhaps the most important contribution of the Guerra de la Independencia to the defeat of the French was by preventing them transporting the provisions they could not be prevented from garnering. For this reason the French armies, whenever they had exhausted the provisions they carried with them and eaten what they could find on the ground they occupied, were always liable to be embarrassed if halted or if the season were unfavourable. The French commissariat system therefore appears not only to have imposed a strategy of dispersal upon their armies but done so under circumstances which limited their power to make even temporary strategic concentrations of large forces.

The British, depending on credit, needed only to disperse their agents and not their armies in order to obtain local provisions. The credit system obliged them to maintain bases upon the coast where, at the major ports, trade produced both specie balances that credit could tap and markets where a credit on London (such being ultimately the source of all commissariat credit)

had commercial value²⁷. Thus the importance to Wellington of his Lisbon base was less that it allowed him physical access to imports for supplying his army than that it provided him with the means of paying for the goods and services, imported or indigenous, that he employed. Transport, in the British case like the French, proved the greatest limitation upon the system. Operating however on friendly territory Wellington was able to employ convoys virtually unprotected to move provisions gathered in one area into another, and he was thus enabled, within the practical limitations made clear in chapters V and VI, to concentrate or disperse his army at will. The advantages of sea and river transport over carriage by land tended to reinforce the constraint already imposed by the credit system that a communication with the coast be kept up, since the navigable rivers provided transport routes inland from coastal points to which it was often worth shipping even supplies not imported originally²⁸. The system by which the operations of 1813/14 were supported is a large scale example of this practice. The coast therefore, while of importance in the economy of the whole Peninsula which imported so much of its food, was of particular importance to the British army as a source of money and an area of rapid transport, whereas the French could no more have protected regular sea communications than they could overland ones, and their methods of raising money were as effective inland as on the coast.

Since chapter VI has demonstrated the paucity of careful advance planning for the campaign of 1812 on the commissariat side, a fact somewhat at odds with Wellington's familiar reputation for prudence and forethought, it remains to be considered what effect commissariat concerns did have on the army's operations, beyond the occasional instances discovered in earlier chapters and the grand strategy considered above. It is true that the British system was always flexible, allowing some kind of an operation to be mounted, provided the precautions had been taken of filling the forward depots and bringing the mule brigades up to strength, and the gaps in the supply to be filled from local sources. It is not true however that it could meet all demands or that it remained unaffected by changing strategical conditions.

27. The sums of money realised by the sale of Treasury Bills were greatest at large ports like Lisbon or Cadiz. Smaller sums were raised at Corunna, Oporto, Gibraltar and many South Spanish ports. The only inland centre where their sale was attempted was Madrid, with disappointing results. P.R.O. W.O. 57/5, Harrison to Herries, 29th September 1812.

28. The shipping of supplies from Lisbon to the Mondego in March 1811 for example.

In fact between 1809 and 1814 there arose two British commissariat systems, each adapted to different strategic necessities. The first prevailed from late 1809 until 1812. It was born of the lessons of Oporto and Talavera, that casual supply arrangements could not be relied upon under campaigning conditions and in particular that transport was the key to keeping a concentrated army provisioned, and it was characterised by the transport organisation that attached mules in increasing numbers to individual units and employed carts behind the army to ferry provisions from all sides to the few points to which the army's mule brigades were sent to make the collection. The combination of this transport network and the various methods of supply outlined in chapter III proved capable of supporting the army inland in Portugal during 1810, a strategic juncture which in any case demanded a defensive posture on the part of the allies, and capable also of restoring the army to the borders of the country during 1811. When the strategic situation turned in the allies' favour, the system broke down. Despite the presence of large supply stocks in Portugal, the transport network proved incapable of moving them forward into Spain fast enough for the consumption of the army, itself much enlarged since 1810, and the resulting purchases of local supplies, besides the extra cost of attempts to extend the transport system, proved too expensive for the commissariat credit apparatus. If Wellington was to take the offensive, a system was required which would support his troops in Spain not simply as raiders, or even for the duration of another summer campaign, but as permanent occupiers of the country.

The experience of 1812 demonstrated that to extend into Spain the system hitherto found adequate for the defence of Portugal and the maintenance of a concentrated army near the Spanish border, involved prohibitive expense for such large numbers as were necessary to defeat the French. While an advance to Vitoria in spring and summer presented few difficulties, the maintenance of the army later in the year on the ground won could only have been achieved by depending further on purchases and the activities of contractors, less the one sixth of the bread supply noted in chapter VI to have, in fact, arrived overland at the army in July and August 1813, and this would have cost at least as much as the previous campaign from which large debts were still outstanding. The best way to avoid this expense was to use some of the large reserve stocks held in Portugal, principally at Lisbon, augmented by any supplies which could be purchased with Treasury Bills, a mode of payment costing nothing in the Peninsula but rarely possible outside a trading port.

If however the provisions were advanced overland into Spain, even supposing it physically possible, which from the performance of the transport system in 1812 appeared unlikely, the transport expenditure would cancel the saving on supplies and the pace would be so slow that two campaigns or more would be needed to reach the Pyrenees. The solution of shipping the supplies to Santander and beyond was both quick and cheap since the transport cost could be met in England. In the event unexpected delays in the shipping, brought about mainly by the danger from American privateers and the shortage of British naval units along the north Spanish coast, retarded the arrival of the reserve stocks and might have proved serious had it been necessary to send round to Santander further supplies bought in Lisbon with Treasury Bills²⁹. In June however the opening of the Baltic made it possible once more to supply grain from the United Kingdom, and from July onwards the flow of supplies from Britain both removed the army's dependence (for provisions) on the sea route to Lisbon and contributed towards reducing expenditure in the Peninsula, a "considerable public economy"³⁰, as Herries gravely remarked. Thus did a disaster for Napoleon at one end of Europe contribute to his defeat at the other, and thus was Wellington's attempt to economise favoured by external events.

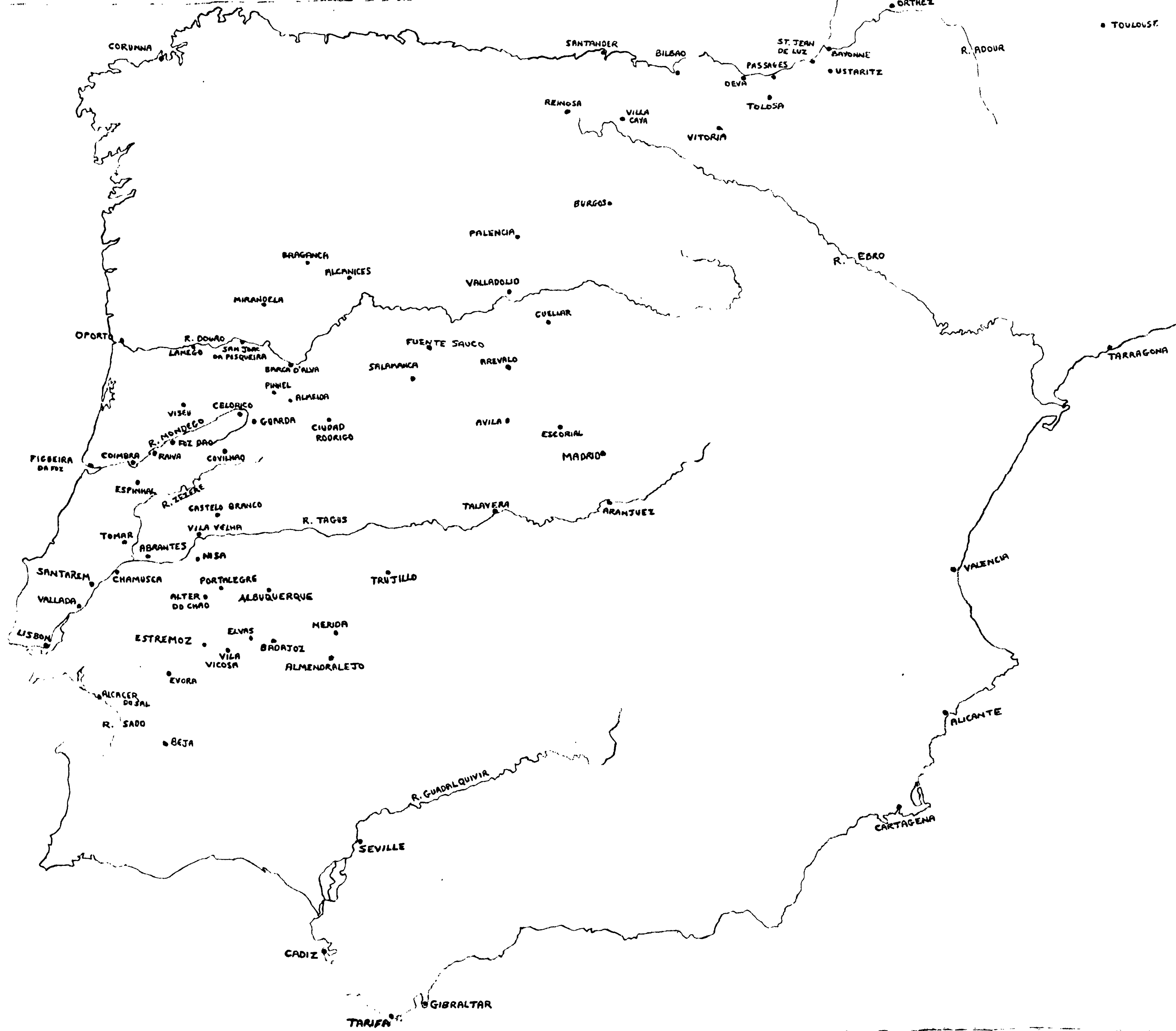
The new commissariat system of supplying by sea the forward bases³¹ and having the mule brigades fetch provisions thence to the divisions was successful in maintaining the army in the Pyrenees at less expense than the supply had demanded in 1812. The combined effects of winter and mountainous roads prevented the mules providing a complete supply from the rear and contractors were needed to supplement their efforts, but at least what was supplied from the rear had usually cost the Peninsular department nothing, and the absence of the river and cart transport stages also served to save money. The same supply apparatus however, although extended along the coast to St. Jean de Luz and ultimately to Bordeaux, proved less well adapted to the invasion of France undertaken in the closing months of the war. Moving away from the coastal depots threw upon the commissariat the expense of

29. It did prove possible to buy some supplies with Bills at Santander. Ogilvie spent £2,543 in this way between the 7th July and the 18th August 1813. N.L.S. Acc 4370 No 17877 f 134.

30. P.R.O. W.O. 58/134, Herries to Kennedy, 18th June 1813.

31. Some of the supply to these forward bases was still obtained by transactions on the spot. See Supplementary Despatches VIII p 531 Bathurst to Wellington, 21st April 1814, for trade on private account at St. Jean de Luz.

increased local purchases which it was felt particularly desirable to settle promptly thereby conciliating the local population. It is hard to see how any extended operations in France could have been carried on without the re-establishment of a transport system capable of providing at least the basic supplies of bread and corn at a distance greater than three or four days' march from the coast and without an increased supply of money to pay both for the extra transport and for some of the arrears of that currently employed. Both a money supply and a transport organisation had had to be provided when Wellington first arrived in Portugal and had been arranged with reasonable success between 1809 and 1811. The army in 1814 was however larger than previously, it was setting out from a position of indebtedness immense in comparison with the few liabilities left behind by Moore's campaign and the events of 1808 and the operations were this time on potentially hostile soil where no common enemy or government at least in principle compliant would help the army to obtain co-operation from the people if by its actions they were estranged. The same arrangement that had permitted the defence of Portugal would not have proved feasible on this new occasion. To render inland marches by the allies possible the French inhabitants and authorities must have been prepared to extend to the British commissariat the credit and compliance they had enjoyed in the other areas of the war and without which they could never have advanced from the coastline of Portugal.



BIBLIOGRAPHY.

1. Private Papers:

At the Public Record Office W.O. 62/2 Documents of A.C.G. Strachan
 W.O. 62/18 Documents of A.C.G. Murray
 W.O. 77/1 The Archer Papers 1814.

At the British Museum, relevant matter contained in

Add Mss 31229-37 The Vansittart Papers
Add Mss 35059-67 The Hill Papers
Add Mss 38190-489 The Liverpool Papers
Add Mss 41511-66 The Heytesbury Papers
Add Mss 49471-517 The Willoughby Gordon Papers
Add Mss 57366-465 The J.C. Herries Papers.

At the National Army Museum Acc 6807/22 Documents of Mr Jackson C.D.
 Acc 7508/24 Journal of Conductor Morris
 Acc 7701/36 The Marsden Papers.

At the National Library of Scotland Add 4370 Nos 16426, 16541, 16923-31,
17113, 17256, 17771, 17875-912, 17914-31, 17933-66, 17969-85, 20962, 21542/3,
21563-5, 21840, 22079-81, 23100. The Ogilvie Papers.

At the time of consultation these papers were in the course of being refoiled and recatalogued. Documents referred to in the text have therefore been identified where possible by their titles rather than their folio numbers.

2. State Papers: At the Public Record Office

W.O. 57/2-6 Treasury to Commissary in Chief's Office 1809-14
W.O. 57/13, 24 and 38-47 Peninsula to Commissary in Chief 1810-15
W.O. 57/58 Miscellaneous letters to Commissary in Chief 1810-15
W.O. 58/56 Commissary in Chief to Transport Board 1809-14
W.O. 58/57 Commissary in Chief to Commissioners of Victualling
 1812-14
W.O. 58/130-5 Commissary in Chief to Peninsula 1810-16
A.O.1 503/146-150, 569/459 - 572/472 Various Peninsula Accounts

3. Other Manuscript Sources:

At the Public Record Office W.O. 61/1, 2, 4, 19 and 108 Assorted

Commissariat papers

A.O. 16/54 Peninsular Orderly Books

A.O. 11/20 Establishments.

At the British Museum Eg. Mss 388 French and Spanish papers respecting the Peninsular War.

At the National Army Museum Acc 7512/124 State of Supplies, December 1813.

At the Arquivo Historico Militar, Lisbon Divisao 1, Seccao 14, Caixa 48 Num 1
List of Portuguese Inhabitants in the Service of the British Commissariat.

4. Published Primary Sources:

The Despatches of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington ed. J. Gurwood 12 vols 1834-8.

Supplementary Despatches and Memoranda of Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington ed. the 2nd Duke of Wellington 15 vols 1858-72.

The General Orders of the Duke of Wellington ed. J. Gurwood 1837.

18th Report of the Commissioners of Military Inquiry, appointed by Act 45 Geo 3, c 47, to inquire into the Management of the Military Department, and into the means of preventing Abuses therein. 1812.

Army Lists 1812-15.

Portuguese Transport Regulation of December 1811, published n.d. with English translation on the recto pages.

5. Memoirs, Journals and eye witness Accounts:

Commissariat and Field Train.

P. Buckham, Personal Narrative of Adventures in the Peninsula published anonymously 1827.

G. L. Chesterton, Peace, War and Adventure

A. B. Dallas, Incidents in the Life and Ministry of the Rev'd R. C. Dallas 1871

J. E. Daniel, Journal of an Officer in the Commissariat Department of the Army 1820

W. Graham, Travels in Portugal, Spain and France 1812-14 1820

E. Herries, Memoir of the Public Life of the Right Hon. J.C. Herries 1880.

- R. D. Henegan, Narrative of the Services of Sir R.D. Henegan, Paris 1832
- R. D. Henegan, Seven Years' Campaigning in the Peninsula and the Netherlands, 1846
- G. Head, Memoirs of an Assistant Commissary-General enclosed in A Home Tour through the Manufacturing Districts of England in summer 1835, 1968
- R. I. Routh, Observations on Commissariat Field Service and Home Defences, 1852
- A. L. F. Schauman, On the Road with Wellington. The Diary of a War Commissary in the Peninsular Campaigns ed. and transl. A. Ludovici 1924

Non-Commissariat. N.B. This list is not intended to include every Peninsular memoir published, only those referred to in the text or those containing useful information about matters of supply. For a full list of Peninsular memoirs the reader is recommended to the bibliography in Anthony Brett-James' Life in Wellington's Army.

- R. Blakeney, A Boy in the Peninsular War ed. J. Sturgis 1899
- C. Cadell, Narrative of the Campaigns of the 28th Regiment since their Return from Egypt in 1802 1835
- F. N. Fririon, Journal Historique de la Campagne de Portugal Paris 1841
- M. Foy, Vie Militaire du Général Foy ed. M. Girod de l'Ain Paris 1900
- A. Frazer, Letters of Colonel Augustus Frazer ed. Sabine 1859
- G. R. Gleig, The Subaltern 1825
- J. Kincaid, Adventures in the Rifle Brigade in the Peninsula, France and the Netherlands from 1809 to 1815 1830
- J. B. Koch, Mémoires de Masséna 7 vols Paris 1848-50
- F. S. Larpent, The Private Journal of F.S. Larpent ed. G. Larpent 2 vols 1853
- J. J. Pelet, The French Campaign in Portugal 1810-11 ed. and transl. D.B. Howard Minneapolis 1973.
- N. Soult, Mémoires ed. L & A. de Saint-Pierre Librairie Hachette 1955
- G. Simmons, A British Rifle Man. The Journals and Correspondance of Major George Simmons ed. W. Verner 1899
- W. Surtees, Twenty Five Years in the Rifle Brigade 1833
- W. Tomkinson, The Diary of a Cavalry Officer ed. J. Tomkinson 2nd edition 1895
- W. Warre, Letters from the Peninsula ed. E. Warre 1909
- W. Wheeler, The Letters of Private Wheeler 1809-1828 ed. B.H. Liddell Hart 1951

6. Secondary Sources:

Military Histories.

- F. C. Beatson, Wellington: The Bidassoa and Nivelle 1931
- F. C. Beatson, Wellington: The Crossing of the Gaves and the Battle of Orthez 1925
- D. W. Davies, Sir John Moore's Peninsular Campaign 1808-9 The Hague 1974
- J. W. Fortescue, History of the British Army 20 vols 1899-1930

- M. Glover, Wellington as Military Commander 1968
M. Glover, The Peninsular War 1807-14 1974
D. D. Horward, The Battle of Bussaco: Masséna versus Wellington Tallahassee 1965

Jomini, Guerre d'Espagne ed. F. Lecomte n.d.

J. T. Jones, Journals of Sieges carried on by the Army under the Duke of Wellington 2 vols 1827

J. P. Lawford and P. Young, Wellington's Masterpiece: the Battle and Campaign of Salamanca 1973

P. Mackesy, The War in the Mediterranean 1803-10 1957

W. Napier, History of the War in the Peninsula and in the South of France from the Year 1807 to the Year 1814 6 vols 1832-40

C. Oman, A History of the Peninsular War 7 vols Oxford 1903-30

J. Weller, Wellington in the Peninsula 1962

Biographies.

A. Brett-James, General Graham, Lord Lynedoch 1959

A. H. Craufurd, General Craufurd n.d.

P. Guedalla, The Duke 1931

O. Kamin, Sir Francis D'Ivernois 1757-1842. Sa Vie, son Oeuvre, ses Temps Geneva 1920

E. Longford, Wellington: the Years of the Sword 1969

J. Marshall-Cornwall, Marshal Masséna 1965

G. C. Moore-Smith, The Life of John Colbourne, Field Marshal Lord Seaton 1903

H. B. Robinson, Memoirs of Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton 2 vols 1835

E. Sidney, Life of Lord Hill 1845

R. H. Thoumine, Scientific Soldier. A Life of General Le Marchant O U P 1968

M. Wellesley, The Man Wellington 1937

Economic and Financial Studies.

J. Clapham, The Bank of England. A History 1944

F. Crouzet, L'Economie Britannique et le Blocus Continentale 1806-13 Paris 1958

A. Cunningham, British Credit in the Last Napoleonic War Cambridge 1910

W. F. Galpin, The Grain Supply of England during the Napoleonic Period 1925

A. Gayer, The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy 1790-1850 1953

C. N. Parkinson, The Trade Winds - British Overseas Trade 1793-1815 1948

J. M. Sherwig, Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the Wars with France 1793-1815 1969

Other Topics.

- N. Baker, Government and Contractors 1971
- A. Brett-James, Life in Wellington's Army 1972
- M. Van Creveld, Supplying War C U P 1977
- G. Davies, Wellington and his Army 1954
- A. Forbes, A History of the Army Ordnance Services 2 vols 1929
- J. W. Fortescue, RASC. History of Transport and Supply in the British Army
2 Vols C U P 1930
- R. Glover, Peninsular Preparation C U P 1963
- D. Gray, Spencer Perceval: the Evangelical Prime Minister Manchester 1963
- T. M. Maguire, The British Army under Wellington 1906
- S. de Minano, Diccionario Geografico-Estadistico de Espana y Portugal 12 vols
Madrid 1826
- F. Myatt, The Soldier's Trade 1974
- C. Oman, Wellington's Army 1913
- S.G.P. Ward, Wellington's Headquarters O U P 1957

Articles.

- C. W. Crawley 'French and English Influences in the Cortes of Cadiz 1810-14'
Cambridge Historical Journal 6 (1938)
- K. E. Crowe 'Thomas Burn Catherwood and the Medical Department of Wellington's
Army 1809-14' Medical History Vol 20 No 1 January 1976.
- G. Ellison 'Army Administration' The Army Quarterly October 1921.
- W. F. Galpin 'The American Grain Trade to the Spanish Peninsula 1810-14' American
Historical Review 28 (1922).
- J. H. Rose 'George Canning and the Spanish Patriots in 1808' American Historical
Review 12 (1906/7)
- J. Rydjord 'British Mediation between Spain and her Colonies 1811-13' Hispanic
American Historical Review 21 (1941)
- N. J. Silberling 'Financial and Monetary Policy of Great Britain during the
Napoleonic Wars' Quarterly Journal of Economics 38 (1923/4)
- J. R. Torrance 'Sir George Harrison and the Growth of Bureaucracy in the early
19th Century' Economic History Review 83 (1968)
- G. E. Watson 'The United States and the Peninsular War' Historical Journal
December 1976.
- J. Weller 'Wellington's Peninsular War Logistics' Journal of the Society for
Army Historical Research 42.